



Department of New York Voice of Democracy Chairman's Guide



Thank you for accepting the responsibility as the Voice of Democracy (VOD) Program Chairman for the Department of New York.

You are expected to perform your duties to the best of your ability and to become familiar with the requirements of the VOD Program.

This Chairman's Guide will provide you some of the necessary guidelines in performing your duties. There may be additional references you may need to review either on the Department or National websites and/or other documentation that may be issued during the ensuing year.

It is important that you learn as much as you can about your position and ask questions if you are not sure of what you will be required to do. I and my staff are available to assist you in this endeavor to ensure you are successful in your efforts.

Some of our earliest ties in the community involve youth groups and perhaps none are stronger or more lasting than the relationship between the VFW and America's schools. The Voice of Democracy Program provides students an opportunity of being rewarded with college scholarships of up to \$30,000.00

Please ensure that the program is advertised to our Districts, Councils and Posts and they fully understand the application and deadline requirements of the VOD Program.

You will be required to expeditiously review the submission of VOD applications from the Districts and convene a panel of judges to review the applications and select a nominee to the State Commander for submission to VFW National Headquarters by the published deadline in addition to any required reports to National. Deadlines are important, and I expect you to meet them.

Additionally, as part of your responsibilities as Chairman, you will be expected to prepare a short written report of your activities to be submitted two weeks prior to the Spring and Fall Department Conferences and State Convention. If called upon to make an oral report, you will be invited by letter prior to any conference or convention.

The State Commander is confident of your ability to manage the Voice of Democracy Program and am sure you will be extremely successful in your endeavors.

Thank you for stepping up and accepting this challenging position.

The following resources and applications for the current year programs are available on the VFW National Website at www.vfw.org under the Community Service and Youth Programs Tab.

➤ Voice of Democracy Audio-Essay Competition

- [Voice of Democracy Entry Form](#) - Gain access to this year's theme, rules and entry form
 - [Voice of Democracy Brochure](#) - Help spread the word about our VOD competition
 - [National Scholarship Award List](#) - View a complete listing of national scholarships awarded
 - [Score Sheet](#) - The official Voice of Democracy judges' score sheet
 - [Post, District and Department Reports](#) - The official VFW reporting and summary on the All-American Dashboard
 - [Department VOD Report Instructions](#) - Everything you need to know on forwarding your VOD winner to national
 - [Competition Announcement Press Release](#) - Fill in the blanks and send to your local media
 - [Voice of Democracy Winner Press Release](#) - Fill in the blanks and promote your local winner
 - [Public Service Announcement Script](#) - Ask local TV and radio stations to promote the program
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Voice of Democracy Rules and Eligibility

WHO CAN ENTER

The Voice of Democracy Program is open to students in grades 9-12 enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private, parochial school, or home study program in the U.S., its territories or its possessions. Dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools are also eligible to participate.

HOW TO ENTER

Download the Voice of Democracy entry form and brochure to submit your essay to your local VFW Post.

Students should record their reading of the draft to an audio CD or flash drive. The recording can be no shorter than three minutes and no longer than five minutes (plus or minus five seconds).

Entries begin at the Post level. Once the student creates their essay and completes burning the audio version to an audio CD/flash drive, they can submit their typed version, CD/flash drive and the Voice of Democracy entry form to their local participating VFW Post by the Oct. 31 deadline.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Originality is worth 30 points: Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

Content is worth 35 points: Clearly express your ideas in an organized manner. Fully develop your theme and use transitions to move smoothly from one idea to the other.

Delivery is worth 35 points: Speak in a clear and credible manner.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 54th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3590
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.545.2259
Fax 202.545.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY



2021-2022 Theme

“America: Where do we go from here?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2021

Patriotic Audio Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$30,000 Award

What is the Voice of Democracy Program?

Since 1947, the Voice of Democracy has been the Veterans of Foreign Wars' (VFW's) premier scholarship program. Each year, nearly 57,000 high school students compete for more than \$2 million in scholarships and incentives. Students compete by writing and recording an audio essay on an annual patriotic theme. This year's theme is, **America: Where do we go from here?**

Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, state and national level. Department (State) winners receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, to tour the city, be honored by the VFW and its Auxiliary and receive their portion of \$154,000 in national awards, the top scholarship being \$30,000.

The Rules

Who can enter?

The Voice of Democracy is open to students in grades 9-12 by the Oct. 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public private or parochial high 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 (the application for which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Foreign exchange students, students age 20 or over, previous Voice of Democracy first place state winners, GED or Adult Education Students are ineligible.

What do I need to enter?

Record your original 3-5 minute (+ or - 5 seconds max.) audio essay and submit the recording, typed essay and completed entry form to your school/group competition or local VFW Post for judging. In addition you can submit your emailed entry form, essay, and audio file to the VFW Post upon approval. You must be the sole author of your essay. The recording must be in your own voice and in English. Hearing/speech impaired students should email the Voice of Democracy National Office at youthscholarships@vfw.org for special instructions. No music, singing, poetry or sound effects are allowed. The body of the essay must not identify you in any way, (including, but not limited to, your name, school, city, state, race or national origin) although the recording and typed essay should be labeled with your name, to show ownership. You may enter only one competition at one Post (if otherwise eligible) per year. At any time during the contest, additional participant personal information could be requested by the VFW, including but not limited to a photograph, SSN or biographical information.

2021-2022 Official Entry Form

Voice of Democracy Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

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Phone

Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

Grade in School

Age

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and Email (if applicable)

To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian

(required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

()

Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian's Email

Participant Agreement for Students Advancing to National Level

If selected as a first-place state winner, I have the consent of my parent/guardian and school to attend the Voice of Democracy National Finals in Washington, D.C. as a guest of the VFW National Organization. In consideration for permission to participate in the National Voice of Democracy Competition ("Competition") I do hereby, for myself, for my heirs, executors, administrators and assignees, waive, release and discharge all rights and claims which I have or which may hereafter accrue against the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and/or the Departments (state organizations) of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and their respective officers, agents, successors and assigns from any damages which may be sustained by me in connection with my participation in or association with the Competition and/or arising out of any travel related to the Competition. In the event of sickness, accident or injury in connection with the Competition, I consent to and accept the services of a duly licensed medical, surgical or dental specialist selected on my behalf and for such treatments, as they may deem necessary. I understand that VFW will not be liable for such treatment. I further understand that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States retains non-exclusive rights to use my audio file, essay, name and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

2021-2022 Theme

"America: Where do we go from here?"

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2021

I Have Read and Understand the Rules and Participant Agreement (On Opposite Side)

I certify that I am the sole author of the enclosed audio/essay entry and that I have only entered the competition once yearly if otherwise eligible. I understand that if it is found that I have entered any other Post's competition or used this essay for another VFW competition, I face elimination from the competition and will return any and all prizes or incentives awarded.

Signature of Student Participant

Date

To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post Level Voice of Democracy Competition.

Post Commander's/Chairman's Signature

Post #

VFW Auxiliary President's/Chairman's Signature (if applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of students participating

No. of winners advanced to District

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarship awards \$

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$

To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Voice of Democracy Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Departments.

District Chairman's Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

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Phone

Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairman

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition, is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairman's Signature

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Daytime Phone

Email

The winner ☐ has been ☐ will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on _____.

Where Do I Submit My Entry?

All entries begin at the local VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the local VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. This VFW Post should be within your local area and within your U.S. state of residence. Entries sent to VFW National will be returned. One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. If you need help finding a participating VFW Post in your area, follow these instructions: First, visit this website vfw.org/FindaPost to "Find A VFW Post." Be sure this Post is within the state you reside in. If you do not have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble getting in touch with them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit this link <https://www.vfw.org/ContactUs/> and look for "Find a State Contact" to get your VFW state office's phone number and email. If you still need assistance, please email us at VFW National Headquarters at youthscholarships@vfw.org

What Is the Deadline for My Entry?

All entries competing at the Post level must be in the hands of that VFW Post by midnight, Oct. 31, 2021. It is the responsibility of the student to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location by ensuring it is a participating Post.

What Are the Judging Criteria?

Originality is worth 30 points:

Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

Content is worth 35 points:

Clearly express your ideas in an organized manner. Fully develop your theme and use transitions to move smoothly from one idea to another.

Delivery is worth 35 points:

Speak in a clear and credible manner.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has again approved this contest for its National Advisory List of Contests and Activities.



For assistance contact:
816.756.3390 ext. 6155
Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org

Revised 4/2021

LOCAL VFW POST INFORMATION:

CONTACT: _____

PHONE: _____

BEST TIME TO CALL: _____

ALTERNATE CONTACT: _____

PHONE: _____

BEST TIME TO CALL: _____



VFW VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN CHAIRMAN'S MANUAL

Revised as of 7/7/17

The Role of the Chairman

VFW's chairmen do more than just plan projects to improve their communities. They also recruit volunteers, build relationships with community leaders, organize partnerships with civic groups, and promote the VFW.

You Are the Point Person

A program chairman should understand one important fact right from the outset: You are the Post's point man in your community. As chairman you will be your Post's liaison to:

- school teachers and administrators
- community leaders
- local military personnel
- city government officials
- members of civic groups
- members of the media
- your fellow veterans

Seek out these new relationships. When it comes time to recruit volunteers or you need specialized expertise for Post projects, these community contacts will prove invaluable.

Project an outgoing, friendly personality. Speak positively about your Post, your community and your projects. Articulate your thoughts and plans clearly, concisely and coherently. Remember, you represent not only your Post, but the entire VFW organization as well.

Reporting Your Activities

You may have heard it said that "the job's not over until the paperwork is done!" That is especially true of VFW Programs.

Chairman must report their Post activities in their respective areas at least twice each year. Check with your respective Department chairman to learn what should be reported and in what form. Documentation of your programmatic efforts is the thing that ensures the VFW's reputation and our not-for-profit status.

Master Organizational Skills

As chairman, your talents must be varied. Consequently, your organizational skills should be fully developed.

Some of your specific duties include:

- recruiting and maintaining a pool of active volunteers
- identifying and initiating programs needed in your community
- motivating your Post members, community volunteers and sponsors involved in your various projects
- recognizing your volunteers efforts
- organizing and maintaining records, photos and newspaper clippings the document your activities
- reporting to your Department chairman the volunteer hours, dollars donated by VFW, VFW Auxiliary and Cooties members and other information requested.

Through the contacts you've developed in your community, cooperate with other civic or fraternal groups. They may already be involved in community service programs you would like to undertake, or they may be eager to help with projects that you've planned. Also identify resources at your Post, talk with members and find out what special skills or hobbies they may have.

VFW Scholarships

At the turn of the 20th century, the founders of the Veterans of Foreign Wars created an organization that would honor and serve veterans and perpetuate the values and ideals for which those veterans had served. Although men of vision, it is doubtful they could imagine the millions of Americans impacted today by the VFW's youth, scholarship and recognition programs. Every year, tens of thousands of students nationwide participate in the Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition and the Patriot's Pen Essay Contest, garnering more than \$3 million in scholarships, awards, and incentives.

Patriot's Pen Essay Contest

Patriot's Pen gives 6th, 7th and 8th grade students the opportunity to express their opinion on a patriotic theme and improve their writing skills, while they compete for awards and prizes. Cumulatively, the awards provided from all levels of the competition total \$1.2 million each year. Each first place Department (state) winner competes for \$54,500 in award money at the national level with the first place national winner receiving \$5,000 and a trip to Washington, DC. Each state winner will receive at least \$500 at the national level.

Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) started the Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition in 1947. The Veterans of Foreign Wars became a national sponsor in the late 1950s and

assumed sole responsibility for the program in 1961. Many notables have participated in the Voice of Democracy including journalist Charles Kuralt, Miss America Anita Bryant and former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft. The Voice of Democracy competition provides high school freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors the opportunity to write and record an audio essay on a patriotic theme, competing for more than \$2.1 million in college scholarships and incentives. Each first place Department (state) winner is brought to Washington, DC. in February to enjoy our nation's capital and compete for \$154,000 in national college scholarships — first place receiving \$30,000. Each state winner will receive at least \$1,000 at the national level.

Promote the Programs

Contact all schools and youth groups in your area in the spring (before the school year ends) and again in the Fall after school starts, to make them aware of these opportunities. Contact the media in September to help you publicize the programs and again in November and December to announce your winners after the judging. Encourage teachers and other youth leaders to visit the VFW web site at <http://www.vfw.org/Youth/>

Please announce that the National Association of Secondary School Principals has placed both the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen programs on the [NASSP National Advisory List of Contests and Activities for 2016-2017](#).



Your Commitment

To ensure a successful competition, Posts and Auxiliaries must commit knowledgeable chairmen, enthusiastic volunteers and resources to both competitions. Our goal is to increase the number of participating students every year. Approach schools in the spring because that is when most curriculum decisions are made for the coming Fall. In late summer, revisit to ensure they have the necessary materials and are prepared to do the program. Don't hesitate to involve school administrators, PTA/PTO/PSO parents, teachers, counselors, radio and TV stations, newspapers, churches and other service, civic and community groups and organizations to encourage and facilitate student participation, help

with the judging and generally promote the programs. We provide score sheets, brochures, sample news releases and PSAs on www.vfw.org – you would **log-in** at www.vfw.org as a VFW member, then click on MY VFW and look for the [VFW Training and Support](#) section under the [Resources](#) column. Then click on [Citizenship Education, Youth Scholarships and Activities](#). Present VFW Scholarship Programs anywhere there are groups of students who might be interested. In addition to schools and home school programs; chairman should consider church youth groups, athletic teams, and Boy Scout and Girl Scout units – any place where young people can be reached.

Work Together

The VFW Chairmen, the Auxiliary Chairmen and volunteers should work together. It is the responsibility of the chairman to recruit and equip their volunteers with the basic contest details to conduct a successful scholarship program from start to finish.

Deadlines

The deadlines for both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are as follows:

1. **Midnight, October 31**, Entries to the Post*
2. **November 15**, Completion of Post judging**
3. **December 15**, Completion of District judging**
4. **January 10**, Completion of Department judging**
5. **January 15**, District participation reports to Department Chairmen**
6. **January 15**, Department winners to National*
7. **January 31**, Department reports to National*

*required deadlines **suggested deadlines

Order or Download Materials Early

Order or download and print out Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen student entry forms early in the year so you can provide a copy to anyone who needs one. These forms explain the programs: complete rules, who can enter, how to enter, how schools can handle the program and how students and teacher can connect with a VFW Post to present their entries. The entry forms can be downloaded online at <http://www.vfw.org/Youth/> (click on **Youth Education** from this link.) Anyone (students, teachers, chairmen, etc) can visit these web pages. The new themes are announced and new entry forms will be available by April 1 annually....for the following Oct 31 student entry deadline.

Additional program items, student awards and gifts are available through the VFW Store at (800) 821-2606, or online at www.vfwstore.org

All information needed for chairmen to conduct the programs are online now under "My VFW." VFW Chairmen can visit this website <http://www.vfw.org/Login.aspx> where you would log in as a VFW member (then click on "MY VFW.") Under the "Member Resources" heading you would click on "VFW Training and Support." Go to the "Community Service & Youth Programs" area. If you have any questions, or you need assistance, please e-mail the Youth Scholarships Coordinator, VFW Programs, VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, at youthscholarships@vfw.org or call 816-756-3390.

Judging the Contest

For both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen (at each level of competition) the suggested number of judges is five to nine (or a minimum of three.) Judges should be from outside your Posts/Auxiliaries and should represent your community. Leaders from education, broadcasting, corporations, small business, and other fraternal and civic groups are ideal. Judges must not be connected in any way with the students in the competition. Set the date for your judging and invite the judges at least 90 days in advance. Remind them a week before the competition with a letter or e-mail and two days before with a telephone call. Ask permission to publicize their selection (along with the program) to the media, then follow up after the judging with a thank you. Invite them to your awards event and publicly express your appreciation for their help. A judges award citation is available through the [VFW Store](#) (800) 821-2606 (item number #4363 for Voice of Democracy and #4329 for Patriot's Pen.)

All Patriot's Pen essays and Voice of Democracy audio essays should be reviewed by the chairman several days before the judging, so that small errors like too many words, an audio CD or USB drive that will not play on your equipment, a Voice of Democracy audio essay that is a bit too long/short, or a reference that inadvertently identifies them might be corrected by the student rather than a chairman eliminating them from the competition. Chairmen should never forget that our priority is to increase the number of students participating, rather than eliminate them. In the case of Voice of Democracy, the Program Chairman must be present for the judging at a site that avoids distractions.. The chairman does not need to be present while Patriot's Pen essays are being judged (the reading/scoring of the Patriot's Pen essays by the judges usually occurs somewhere not at the VFW Post, but off-site.) If the Voice of Democracy judging begins before 9 a.m., you may wish to provide coffee and juice. If judging continues through a mealtime, provide lunch. For Patriot's Pen, each judge should be provided their own copy of the essays and a score sheet (score sheets are available online on MY VFW.) For the Voice of Democracy judging, judges need only score sheets and pencils. Voice of Democracy entries must be judged on the **audio recording only**, so the judges usually do not see a typed copy of each essay, unless a judge requests one from the chairman. All Patriot's Pen essays and Voice of Democracy recordings should be identified by number to ensure the anonymity of the competitor. Competitors should never be asked to present their essay in person during the actual judging. Judges should be discouraged from discussing the Patriot's Pen essays or Voice of Democracy audio-recordings during the judging process and should have no contact with the competitors. They should not see a photograph of the competitor. The judges' decisions are **always FINAL**.

Judging Criteria

Voice of Democracy contestants are judged on the following criteria:

Originality (possible 30 pts.) Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

Content (possible 35 pts.) Ideas are expressed clearly and in an organized manner.

Delivery (possible 35 pts.) Speaking voice is clear and credible.

Patriot's Pen contestants are judged on the following criteria:

Theme knowledge (possible 30 pts.) Has the student researched and understood the theme?

Theme development (possible 35 pts.) Does the essay answer relevant questions: who, what, where and why?

Clarity of ideas (possible 35 pts.) Is the writer's interpretation of the theme presented clearly?

REMEMBER....INTERPRETATION OF THE THEME IS UP TO THE STUDENT. ENTRIES SHOULD NOT BE DISQUALIFIED BECAUSE THEIR INTERPRETATION SEEMS INCORRECT OR INAPPROPRIATE.

(NOTE: no limit)

Local Competition Alternatives

Recently, teachers and school leaders have shown reluctance to participate in our scholarship competition if they devote precious class time to completing entry forms and (in the case of the Voice of Democracy) record essays. For this reason, we offer teachers/youth leaders the option to simply use Voice of Democracy or Patriot's Pen as a writing exercise. The teacher/leader may submit all entries to the Post for judging or conduct a judging within the group/class and advance a winner for every fifteen (15) participants. Note: This decision should be determined by the Post Chairman; working closely with the teacher or group leader.

School/Youth Group to Post (both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen)

1-15 essays – One (1) entry to Post

16-30 essays – Two (2) entries

31-45 essays – Three (3) entries

(NOTE: no limit)

Post Competition

Post entries are required to include the following:

Patriot's Pen: Typed essay in English of 300-400 words (+/- 5 words -- no graphics) and a student entry form completed legibly. All words must be counted (except the theme.)

Voice of Democracy: Typed essay, audio CD (or flash/USB drive) of the recorded essay (3-5 minutes, +/- 5 seconds), and a student entry form completed legibly. Please refer to the student Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen entry forms to review the complete rules and guidelines. For both programs, Posts must accept and judge all eligible entries received by midnight, October 31. If a Post decides on a later student entry deadline that is acceptable, as long as they can meet the District deadline for submitting their Post winner(s).

Post to District (for both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen)

1-15 essays – One (1) entry to District

16-30 essays – Two (2) entries

31-45 essays – Three (3) entries

District to Department

One (1) entry per District (**with student's head & shoulders photo added at this time for first place District winner.**) *This applies to both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen.*

Judging CDs

For Voice of Democracy, the preferred format for CDs is the audio CD format. Flash Drives/USBs can also be accepted. When burning your CD, make sure that 'Create Audio CD' option (or similar) is selected so the program can properly convert your sound file and burn it to CD. After it has finished, be sure to play back your audio CD on a system other than your computer, such as a standard radio or car CD player, to verify that the conversion/burning process was successful."

NOTE: If the entry has been recorded according to the criteria specified above; Posts, Districts and Departments should never reject an entry because they are unable to play the CD or flash drive. Part of the chairman's responsibility is to review the entries to ensure appropriate equipment is available to properly judge the entry.

Special Needs Student Criteria

The Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen competitions are offered to the public primarily through our nation's school systems. In compliance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, we provide "reasonable accommodation" for someone with a documented permanent disability. Requests for accommodation must be submitted in writing with the student's entry materials. As an example, a hearing/speech-impaired student may select another student of the same age and gender to read and record their Voice of Democracy essay. The volunteer assisting the disabled student is not eligible for any scholarship compensation, awards or benefits from the program. All questions regarding accommodation of a disabled student should be directed to the Programs Department, VFW National Headquarters at (816) 756-3390 or youthscholarships@vfw.org

Reporting Guidelines

VFW Post reporting (to District level) is part of each student entry form. Department Chairmen will be e-mailed District and Department reporting forms in August, and blank forms can be e-mailed from the Programs Department upon request in either Word or PDF format. District and Department report forms are also online at MY VFW. January 15 is the deadline for **District** reports to be sent to the **Department** Chairman. The deadline for **Department** reports to arrive at **National** is January 31st. (NOTE: the state winners' packet deadline is two weeks sooner - **January 15**.) Please ensure that a photograph of your Department winner is included, along with the notification date. **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON VOICE OF DEMOCRACY OR PATRIOT'S PEN, CONTACT:**

Youth Scholarships Coordinator
VFW Programs
VFW National Headquarters
406 W 34th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64111
Phone: (816) 756-3390
e-mail: youthscholarships@vfw.org

Revised as of 7/7/17

VFW EDUCATION & TRAINING SERIES

VFW PROGRAMS



VFW Programs Overview

Community Services, Youth
Scholarships and Activities
Programs

Helpful Hints for Program
Execution

Veterans & Military Support
Programs



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

Published/Revision Date: 2.1.17

VFW Programs

The purpose of this document is to help educate all elected and appointed officers of the organization about programs in the organization, from youth programs & scholarships, community service, volunteer recognition, "Buddy"® Poppy, to all programs under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella. Additionally, it will have information concerning U.S. Flag issues and a variety of special projects. Our sole priority is helping your Post, District and Department serve your community and veterans in a meaningful way. For that reason, the VFW National Organization is committed to doing everything possible to serve you and make every opportunity count for you and for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The purpose of this section is twofold. First, we want to familiarize you as leaders of your Post, District or Department, with the fundamentals of our VFW programs and activities. As we do that, it is our goal then to encourage you and your existing leaders to participate to build that much needed relationship with your local community. We are convinced that good programs, properly executed, will do more for your Post than anything else you do.

Your programs are often the first impression that the public has of the VFW. Therefore it's extremely important to be prepared and more importantly appoint the right persons as the program chairman. Your VFW programs are defined under two categories; **Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities** and **Veterans & Military Support**. Within the **Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities** category we often refer to several program elements as our core programs. These are programs that are executed by the largest number of Posts and have the greatest impact on our organization, our communities and our veterans. Typically, these core programs are mandated for every Post as part of your Department All State Program and are heavily encouraged and supported by the VFW National organization. These core programs within the **Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities** include our scholarship programs; Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen, the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year program, Scouting, and "Buddy"® Poppy.

The second group of programs under the **Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities** umbrella, is called Special Projects and Activities, which cover Americanism, volunteer recognition, community service, awards and recognition and other miscellaneous youth activities. These programs are highly encouraged for all Posts and Departments and will be supported by the national organization upon request.

Before you can effectively execute our VFW programs, you first must know the programs. I recommend to all Post, District or Department officers and chairman, to carefully read the program chairman's guides to familiarize yourself with the programs that best fit your Post and your available resources. As a VFW leader, you should be able to speak intelligently and authoritatively about all aspects of our great organization.

The best available resource that we have available is our VFW website (www.vfw.org). I would strongly encourage you as officers and program chairman to establish a login. Doing so, will provide you access to all the information and materials concerning VFW Programs, but will also allow you to access additional information needed to help you execute your duties and responsibilities as an officer of the organization. Important items such as National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure & Ritual amendments and National Resolutions to be presented at the National Convention, our monthly National Headquarters Bulletin and General Orders, and several online fillable forms.

However, the most important benefit of having a login is being able to access **MY VFW**, where you'll have access to all materials and information within our **VFW Training and Support** section. This section contains videos, promotional materials, chairman manuals and resources, and much more on all available areas of the organization.

VFW Programs Overview

Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities

Patriot's Pen



Originally created as the Youth Essay Contest, Patriot's Pen asks junior high and middle school students to write a 300-400 word essay on a new patriotic theme each year. Winners receive scholarships and begin by competing at the Post level. Winners proceed to District, Department and finally to the National level where they compete for the \$5,000 first place scholarship. The themes and additional information concerning program execution can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Community Service and Youth Programs**.

Voice of Democracy



Similar to Patriot's Pen, is the Voice of Democracy Audio/Essay Contest. Since 1947, the VFW has asked high school students to write and record a 3 – 5 minute essay, again on a patriotic theme selected by the VFW each year. Students may record on an audio CD or flash drive. Like Patriot's Pen, Voice of Democracy winners receive scholarships and other incentives at the Post, District, and Department and finally to the National level where they will compete for the \$30,000 first place scholarship. The Voice of Democracy theme and additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Community Service and Youth Programs**.

These two great youth scholarship programs provide over \$3 million in scholarships and incentives every year.

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award

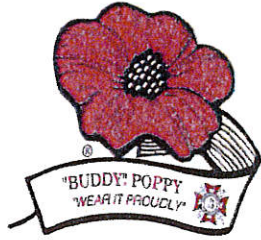


While you're visiting a school, don't miss the opportunity to mention the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teachers Award. The VFW wants to identify and recognize America's best educators who instill a sense of national pride in students. Teachers who promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism are prime candidates. It offers cash awards, commemorative plaques and all-expense paid trips to the VFW National Conventions for those worthy teachers. That honor can establish a great relationship that opens the door for all of the VFW and Auxiliary programs. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Community Service**.

VFW Scout of the Year Program

When you visit schools and other youth oriented programs, don't forget to mention our Scouting involvement that includes our Scout of the Year Scholarship Program. The Scout of the Year program is open to Eagle Scouts, Girl Scout Gold Award, Venture Summit Award recipients and Sea Scout Quartermaster recipients. VFW's Scout of the Year offers a first place \$5,000 scholarship, a second place \$3,000 scholarship and a \$1,000 third place scholarship each year. The VFW has a long relationship with Scouting. VFW Posts need to consider providing leaders, sponsor units, offer their facility for meetings and encourage their involvement in service projects. Posts can benefit from Scouting by having a unit do a flag retirement ceremony, help distribute Buddy Poppies, or help with clean up after events. These are just a few that would provide a benefit and generally can serve your post. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Community Service**.

VFW "Buddy"® Poppy Program



Our oldest and perhaps most historically significant program is the VFW "Buddy"® Poppy program. It is important that you realize that although Memorial and Veterans Days are particularly important "Buddy"® Poppy events, you should have poppies at every event that involves your Post and the public. Poppies can and should be distributed year-round. I'm sure you know that we never "sell" poppies. We give them away and receive donations. If someone cannot make a donation, don't deny them a poppy. Seeing the red poppy on a lapel or dress brings honor to those we have lost and recognition to the VFW.

Additionally, section 219 of the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure, mandates that the net proceeds from the distribution of Buddy Poppies must be credited to the Post Relief Fund. Also listed in section 219 are the purposes which funds can be disbursed from the Post Relief Fund. I would encourage officers at all levels of the organization to familiarize themselves with this section. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Community Service**.

VFW Recognition Programs

The purpose of the VFW Recognition Program is twofold. First and foremost, as an organization of wartime veterans and their spouses, the VFW and its Auxiliary understand the need to recognize and honor those individuals who have performed above and beyond their peers. Of particular significance are those who, like our members and veterans, have placed the safety and welfare of others above and beyond their own. Secondly, the VFW and its Auxiliary realize the value of these awards to the Post, District, Department and National organization.

It's important that VFW and its Auxiliary leaders, at every level, take advantage of every opportunity to honor worthy individuals and sometimes

organizations. With that in mind, the VFW has established a number of suggested awards. The following are suggested awards:

National Citation of Recognition

These citations are available to recognize Posts or individual Post chairmen who have demonstrated an exceptionally high level of service to their community. The Department Chairmen are given sole responsibility for identifying those Posts and individuals.

Public Servant National Awards (Law Enforcement, Firefighter, Emergency Services)

Each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars selects emergency medical technicians (services), law enforcement, and firefighter personnel to receive VFW Public Servant Awards. Posts are encouraged to submit a candidate for these awards to their Department Headquarters by January 1. The Department then selects a single candidate for each of the three awards and submits those to VFW National Headquarters by February 1.

Life Saving Awards

The Safety Chairman at Posts, Districts and Departments are encouraged to regularly identify and honor individuals throughout the year in their geographic area who have saved a life. The VFW programs department provides the three different life saving citations (Regular, Line of duty and Valor), free of charge, for local presentation.

VFW Special Projects & Youth Activities

Our next level of programs is our special projects. These include Americanism, volunteer recognition, community service, awards and recognition and other youth activities. Equally important among our special projects is community service. Any activity done by a Post or Auxiliary that benefits the community falls under this broad banner and is supported by the VFW National Organization and encouraged for all Posts, Districts and Departments. Recognizing these exceptional efforts is provided in three ways - our volunteer recognition programs, Outstanding Community Service Posts Awards, and the Outstanding Post Special Project Award.

The Outstanding Community Service Post Awards are given to Posts identified by their Departments for their exceptional response to VFW community service programs. Each Department determines the actual criteria for their Posts. Posts selected for this honor are invited to send a representative to the VFW National Convention for a reception with the VFW Commander-in-Chief. There they will receive a national plaque and a recognition street sign for their community. Deadline for entries in the Outstanding Community Service Post Award is April 30th, each year.

Outstanding Post Special Project Awards are given each year to Posts that do a special project outside their normal VFW activities. Posts should submit their entries to their Department for review and endorsement before going to VFW National Headquarters. All submissions receive a certificate, Award of Merit plaque or an Award of Excellence plaque. Those receiving an Award of Excellence will compete to win a \$5,000 Community Service Grant. A maximum of eight (8) Posts per conference who receive the Award of Excellence may receive a \$5,000 Community Service Grant and go on to compete for the Fred C. Hall Memorial Post Special Project Award. The Post receiving the Fred C. Hall Award receives a commemorative plaque, an additional \$5,000 Community Service grant, and the Post Commander and his or her guest receive round-trip airfare, accommodations and per diem to attend the VFW National Convention to accept the award.

Lastly, another special project is VFW Veterans in the Classroom. In recent years, many teachers have contacted VFW Posts seeking veterans to come into the classroom and share their military experiences. VFW members may also choose to contact local youth groups and schools and express their willingness to share their experiences. VFW National Headquarters has materials available to support this activity. Many veterans have found this to be enjoyable and therapeutic. Few youth programs provide a greater benefit to a Post than involvement with Scouting, Civil Air Patrol, Naval Sea Cadet or JROTC units. These programs annually produce individuals with an appreciation of patriotism, civic responsibility and the likelihood of future military service. As was mentioned earlier with the Scout of the Year, VFW Posts need to consider providing leaders, sponsoring units, offering their facility for meetings and encouraging their involvement in service projects. Posts can benefit from Scouting by having a unit do a flag retirement ceremony, helping distribute Buddy Poppies, or helping with clean up after events. In the case of JROTC the same applies.

Your place may serve as a location for the JROTC Drill team to practice and, just like scouting, they are an excellent resource for volunteers for Post-sponsored activities.

Posts are encouraged to seek out ways in which they can benefit their community. The VFW encourages any activity that benefits the community, brings recognition to the Post and honors America's veterans and those in uniform. Every program, done by your Post, results in relationships that produce good will. This good will increases public interest in your events, often enhances your fundraising efforts and can produce new members. A Post that has been identified as a community asset through its programs will seldom have a shortage of members or lack of community support. Use your VFW Programs to establish your Post as a respected community asset. The VFW will then become the organization of choice for all veterans and will reap the rewards of public favor that cannot be purchased.

Helpful Hints for Program Execution

Each time you visit a school, conduct a patriotic event, honor a local hero, serve your community's youth or perform any kind of community service; you are creating an impression of the VFW. Hopefully, that impression is the beginning of a relationship that benefits the community and your Post. The goal of any Post should be to become known as a valuable community resource and not the local "watering hole" in the community. Posts that achieve this status rarely have problems with recruiting or fundraising.

So, how do we get young people involved? First let me say that your scholarship programs, like the "Buddy"® Poppy program, should be a part of everything you do in the community. Buddy Poppies and student entry forms for the scholarships should be present at every event where the public is involved.

We will discuss schools first, but later we will explore a variety of other opportunities to present our scholarship programs.

Contact schools, home school associations and other youth organizations early, preferably in April. This is the time of year when they begin planning for the coming fall. When you visit a school, don't go unannounced, call first to find out with whom you should meet and make an appointment.

Schools are busy places and often a secured environment. Showing up without an appointment almost ensures failure. Call, make an appointment and be on time. Conduct yourself professionally and you will be treated professionally.

Make sure you have the necessary materials to leave with the teacher, counselor, principal or administrator on everything you will discuss. Show them copies of the various brochures and identify the entry form included. If the opportunity is available, go into the classroom and present the students with the programs that directly impact them. One of the primary purposes of your visit is to leave the impression that your Post is a resource, not only for scholarships, but for veteran's history, patriotic information, and U.S. Flag etiquette. Don't forget to mention that Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are on the National Advisory List of Student Contests and Activities of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Your chances for success are increased when you work closely with your Auxiliary counterpart. Make sure that they understand and have materials for all the VFW programs. The most successful Posts are always the ones that work hand-in-hand with their Auxiliary. Like our scholarship programs, the Teacher Awards begin at the Post level. Information and entry forms are on the VFW website at www.vfw.org.

A key factor in the success of your scholarship and teacher programs is your judging process. The judging sheets are included on the training website. When selecting your judges, make every attempt to find judges from outside the VFW and its Auxiliary. Local military recruiters, educators, media personalities, police officers, firefighters, church pastors and local civic leaders are excellent choices. If possible, make your life easier by using the same judges for all your scholarships and teacher's awards. Cultivate a good relationship with your judges by expressing your gratitude and inviting them when you honor your winners.

As mentioned earlier, when seeking students to participate don't hesitate to look beyond your schools. These same programs should be presented to the leaders and sponsors of any group that deals with young people. Look around your neighborhood for community centers, athletic teams and leagues, Scout units, churches with large youth groups, home school

associations, YMCA's and YWCA's - anywhere there are large groups of young people who may wish to participate.

In recent years, home school programs have produced a number of winning participants. Home school parents and their associations are generally patriotic, have broader latitude for selecting curricula and are always looking for projects that have value beyond the immediate lesson.

Veterans & Military Support Programs

To continue to detail the core programs, as mentioned earlier, Veterans & Military Support is part of the VFW's never-ending obligation to assist members of the active-duty military, National Guard and Reserves, as well as their families. These programs were established to keep the Veterans of Foreign Wars in the forefront of patriotism as the organization and its members find innovative way to show support for America and her armed forces.

The programs under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella consist of: Operation Uplink, Unmet Needs, Military Assistance Program (MAP) and the VFW "Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship" program. Through these programs, the Veterans of Foreign Wars provided assistance and guidance to our subordinate units in their efforts to support our military and their families. From hosting morale boosting events, sponsoring free phone time, providing financial assistance, to providing scholarships to veterans returning to school.

VFW Operation Uplink



Through the generosity of the VFW members and supporters to include Sport Clips, Operation Uplink has provided millions of connections since 1996. In 2006, Operation Uplink working with MWR SPAWAR internet cafes, created Free Call Days using voice over IP calls for service men and women for 24-hour periods three times a month, including all major holidays.

However, as a result of the troop drawdowns these internet cafes have reduced and consequently so have our connections and talk time. With the reduced internet connections, Operation Uplink still has the ability to provide virtual pin numbers (calling Time) for deployment ceremonies, VA hospitals and service members in countries without MWR cafes. You can contact my office to learn more on how to access these virtual pin numbers. Additional information concerning the execution of the program and the application for the virtual PINS can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Veterans & Military Support**.

VFW Unmet Needs



Unmet Needs provides financial assistance to service members, veterans, and their families. Created in 2004 Unmet Needs assists military service members, veterans, and their families who are experiencing a financial hardship directly related to their military service. The financial assistance is in the form of a one time grant in an amount up to \$5,000. All grants are paid directly to the “creditor” companies (such as the electric company, mortgage company, landlord, etc.) and not to the individual. The funds can be used for rent, car repairs, medical expenses, infant-care items and many other necessities. Each case is reviewed individually and acceptance determined by a committee.

Working with a Family Support Center Coordinator, Family Readiness Director or your Department Veterans & Military Support Chairman, you can help get our service members and fellow veterans the assistance they deserve. An important note about this program is the scholarship application is only available on-line at www.vfw.org and must also be submitted online using the form at our website. Applications submitted by U.S. mail, email and fax will not be accepted. Additional information concerning the execution of the program and the application can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Veterans & Military Support**.

application can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Veterans & Military Support**.

Please remember that the objective of all Military Assistance Program initiatives is increasing the awareness of the VFW and it does not end when the troops re-deploy home. They and their families continue to need our support and assistance.

VFW "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" Program



The last program and the newest program under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella is the VFW "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" program. As mentioned earlier, Sport Clips continues to support the Free Call days through Operation Uplink and the company expanded its Help A Hero initiative to support veterans as they return home through the gift of scholarships. The VFW Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship will help service members get the education and training needed to begin the next chapter of their life. Each scholarship will provide recipients with up to \$5,000 for tuition and fees to apply toward their education at an accredited post-secondary institution, including universities, colleges, trade schools and apprenticeship and certification programs.

An important note about this program is the scholarship application is **only available on-line** at www.vfw.org and **must also be submitted online** using the form at our website. Applications submitted by U.S. mail, email and fax will not be accepted. They'll need to go to <http://www.vfw.org/assistance/student-veterans-support>

VFW Military Assistance Program



MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Another troop support program under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella is the VFW Military Assistance Program. The Military Assistance Program is designed to encourage the link between the VFW and the Military community. This program promotes VFW member interaction with the local military and opens avenues for National Sponsorships and local level involvement with all branches of service. Within this program are two unique services to help foster the relationship between the Post and the local military community, the Military Assistance Program Grant process and the Adopt-A-Unit program.

The Military Assistance Grant process is intended as financial assistance for Posts, Districts, and Departments to sponsor events for active duty military units, National Guard, and Reserves. These events are most successful when local Posts interact directly with the military unit, involving the Veterans & Military Support Chairmen, National Certified Recruiters, Veterans Service Officers, and your local and department chain of command. A Military Assistance Grant application must be submitted to VFW National Headquarters a minimum of two weeks prior to the event. The application must be filled out completely, including a breakdown of the event budget and the VFW involvement with the event. Additional information concerning the execution of the program and the grant application can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the **VFW Training and Support** hub, under **Veterans & Military Support**.

Another opportunity for Posts to interact with their local military community available within the Military Assistance program is the Adopt-A-Unit program. This program was developed as a means to pledge support of the Post to the service members and families of a unit from the local military community. When a Post “adopts” a unit, you make a commitment to the service members and their families to provide moral and emotional support before, during and after deployment. Sponsoring a military unit is a great opportunity to get other community activity projects started, such as coordinating with teachers or schools to co-sponsor the unit. Additional information concerning the execution of the Adopt-A-Unit program and the



Voice of Democracy Score Sheet

Originality: Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

Content: Ideas are expressed clearly and in an organized manner. Theme is fully developed and transitions between ideas are smooth.

Delivery: Speaking voice is clear and credible.

Contestant Code No.

Originality (0-30 pts.)

Content (0-35 pts.)

Delivery (0-35 pts.)

TOTAL (0-100)

Contestant Code No.

Originality (0-30 pts.)

Content (0-35 pts.)

Delivery (0-35 pts.)

TOTAL (0-100)

Contestant Code No.

Originality (0-30 pts.)

Content (0-35 pts.)

Delivery (0-35 pts.)

TOTAL (0-100)

Judge's Signature

Date and Location of Judging

DEPARTMENT VOICE OF DEMOCRACY PARTICIPATION REPORT SUMMARY

DEPARTMENT OF _____ FOR PROGRAM YEAR 20 ____ - 20 ____

PARTICIPATION TOTALS:

_____	_____	_____	_____
Posts	Auxs	Students	Post Winners Advanced
_____		_____	
Districts/Auxs.		County Councils/Auxs.	

List below the *actual amount of money* awarded to participating students:

Posts \$ _____

Districts \$ _____

County Councils \$ _____

Department Awards:

First Place \$ _____

Second Place \$ _____

Third Place \$ _____

Other \$ _____

List below all *additional expenses*

associated with Voice of Democracy Program:

Posts \$ _____

Districts \$ _____

County Councils \$ _____

Department \$ _____

Freedoms Foundation flight (Est) \$ _____

Freedoms Foundation tuition \$ _____

Other expense \$ _____

List below all *Districts* that advanced a winner to the

Department level:

District ____ District ____ District ____

District ____ District ____ District ____

District ____ District ____ District ____

District ____ District ____ District ____

District ____ District ____ District ____

District ____ District ____ District ____

District ____ District ____ District ____

District ____ District ____ District ____

District ____ District ____ District ____

District ____ District ____ District ____

TOTAL

SCHOLARSHIPS: \$ _____

TOTAL ADDITIONAL

EXPENSES: \$ _____

Add **TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS** column (left) and **TOTAL ADDITIONAL EXPENSES** column (right) for **GRAND TOTAL** (below)

GRAND TOTAL \$ _____

Dept VOD Chairman: _____ . (_____) _____

Signature Printed Name Daytime Phone No. Date

PLEASE ATTACH COMPLETED REPORT FORM(S) TO THIS SUMMARY AND SEND DIRECTLY TO:

Dan Parker, Director
VFW Programs
VFW National Headquarters
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Fax: (816) 968-1149
Email: kharmar@vfw.org

DEADLINE: January 31, 2014 (Note: winner's packet is due by Jan 15, 2014)

SUMMARY

DISTRICT VOICE OF DEMOCRACY PARTICIPATION REPORT

DISTRICT NO. _____

DEPARTMENT OF _____, VFW

The VFW Posts and Auxiliaries identified in this report in this District participated in the VFW annual Voice of Democracy Program.

GRAND TOTALS FOR POST COMPETITION: list totals taken from District report form(s)

_____	_____	_____	_____
Posts	Auxs	Students	Post Winners Advanced
\$ _____		\$ _____	
Scholarships & Awards		Addl. Money Expended	

MONETARY VALUE OF DISTRICT COMPETITION (add County Councils if applicable):

District Scholarships & Awards \$ _____

District Additional Expenses \$ _____

Signed by: _____ Date _____

District Chairman

*PLEASE ATTACH COMPLETED REPORT FORM(S) AND GIVE
THIS COMPLETED SUMMARY TO YOUR DEPARTMENT
VOICE OF DEMOCRACY CHAIRMAN NO LATER THAN JANUARY 15, 2015*

DISTRICT VOICE OF DEMOCRACY REPORT FORM

[illegible]