

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

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Our youth are the future of our Auxiliary, our VFW and our country.

It is our responsibility to teach them about our mission and to involve them in “**Serving America’s Heroes**” by encouraging them to participate in all the Auxiliary programs. By working together with our youth, we can be “**Simply the Best for Our Veterans.**”

VFW Auxiliary Lending Library

What is the **VFW Auxiliary Lending Library**? This effort will see Auxiliaries create their own lending libraries where children can borrow reading materials, since not every community has a local library, and approximately 61% of low-income families do not have books in their homes. Your Auxiliary can help kids to expand their imaginations and help them improve their reading ability by providing them with access to books with this new initiative. The libraries can be placed anywhere in your community (with proper approval). Work together with your community to find the location that works best. Some locations include outside your Post, at the community center, the ballfield, or city hall. Outdoor library boxes can be found on Amazon or other online retailers...or make your own! If your local high school has a woodshop program reach out to the teacher to see if they would be interested in making a school project to design and decorate a box. Stock your library with selections from the **Patriotism Through Literacy** reading list found on the National website.

Remember these tips to build your library project:

- Take a book. Share a book.
- Organize a reading to youth event at your VFW Post, or volunteer to read at your local school during **Read Across America Week**.
- Contact a youth group, Scouts or High School club, for help and advice for building your library.
- Use the **#auxlendinglibrary** to promote what you are doing for the VFW Lending Library Project.

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Patriotism Through Literacy:

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

Some of the benefits of Patriotism Through Literacy:

- Instruct 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 better understanding of history through nonfiction.

How can I participate in the Patriotism Through Literacy Program?

- Volunteer to read a historical or creative nonfiction picture book to kids at your local library or at school during Read Across America Week.
- Donate historical fiction or creative nonfiction books to local schools, shelters, libraries or community centers.
- Host a read-a-thon and award small prizes (sticker, pins, pencils) for number of books or hours read.
- Run a writer's workshop for aspiring teens and tween authors at your VFW Post Home.
- Invite an author or 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 helping children understand and share the feelings of others. Reading stretches our imaginations and as Dr. Seuss said, "can take you to places you've never been before."



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VFW Scout of the Year Program:

Some of the earliest ties to the community involve youth groups and none are stronger or more lasting than the relationship between the VFW and America's scouting organizations. **The VFW Scout of the Year program** recognizes members of Scouting of America and Girl Scouts of the United States of America for their standout citizenship, patriotism and love of country.

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

R.A.P. Recognition and Youth Acts of Kindness:

This is one of the easiest ways to recognize our youth when you witness their Random Acts of Patriotism. Have a R.A.P. card available to hand out immediately when you witness that act of Patriotism. Recognize patriotic youth activities with a certificate at a school assembly. Cards and certificates are available in MALTA's Member Resources.

Sponsoring and working with Youth Groups:

As part of the Youth Activities program, an Auxiliary can sponsor a youth group to engage in many of our programs! Many youth organizations require several types of community service or activities, including opportunities to earn school credits. Invite youth groups to join in Auxiliary and Post activities (with parent/guardian supervision).

- Serving or bussing tables for fundraising dinners.
- Participating in holidays and activities at nursing homes.
- Organizing a military night during a local sporting event.
- Building your Little Free Library and stocking it with books.
- Marching in patriotic holiday parades.
- Helping veterans, service members and families with yard work, or snow removal.
- Send cards to the VFW National Home, our troops overseas, or veterans in VA facilities.
- Teaching computer skills to veterans.

Involving youth in service to veterans can attract new members and strengthen families in the Auxiliary. Sponsoring a youth group helps build a brighter future for your Auxiliary, veterans and the community. **YOUTH + AUXILIARY builds team players!**

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Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citations:

Many community youth groups can partner with us, including Scouting America, Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H, National Honor Society and religious youth groups.

The **Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citation** is one way for VFW Auxiliaries to recognize youth groups for their efforts and service projects honoring our veterans and assisting our service members and their families.

The Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citation is available in MALTA Member Resources under Youth Activities.

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 Member Resources under Youth Activities.



Combat Stigma Poster Contest:

Many of our Veterans and service members are struggling with Mental Health issues. Many of them do not seek help due to stigma, fear of being perceived as weak or concerns that it will have a negative impact on their service record/performance. 64% of veterans believe that Mental Health is a “real illness” but 30% think it is “a sign of weakness”.

The Department will be holding a poster contest for youth in grades 6-12 to help combat the stigma associated with Mental Health. The theme is “**It’s ok to not be ok,**” or “**It’s ok to ask for help.**” This is not an “art” contest, the posters will be judged on creativity and best representation of the theme. Bonus points for inclusion of the **Veterans Crisis Line information (988 then dial 1)**. The use of digital art, and/or A.I. is accepted along with traditional forms of art. The top three entries will be judged at the President’s testimonial by popular vote.

Auxiliaries are encouraged to display their entries in the Post Home and on their social media sites.

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

Gifts Cards

To submit an entry: Email a copy of the poster to Amy Clark at amieandsteve@comcast.net.

Include your VFW Auxiliary Post number, your VFW Auxiliary District number and the name/grade level of the youth who designed the poster.

It will be the District President’s responsibility to return entries to the students following Testimonial.



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Illustrating America:

Important reminder: There are several CHANGES to the due dates this year for the Illustrating America contest. The Illustrating America schedule for the 2026-2027 year is:

December 15, 2026: Illustrating America Student entries are due to participating/sponsoring VFW Auxiliaries for judging.

January 2027: Optional 1st place Illustrating America winner in each grade division from each sponsoring VFW Auxiliary are due to VFW Auxiliary District for judging.

January 15, 2027: Illustrating America 1st place winner in each grade division from each participating/sponsoring VFW Auxiliary or optional VFW Auxiliary District are due to the VFW Auxiliary Department for judging.

January 31, 2027: Illustrating America 1st place winner in each grade division from each VFW Auxiliary Department must be received at VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters for judging.

Reach out to your local elementary and middle schools **EARLY** in the school year. Talk to teachers and see if they will incorporate the contest into a class project. Show the community that the VFW Auxiliary is engaged in promoting patriotism among our youth.

The contest is open to any student in grades K-8 who is enrolled in a public, private or parochial school or home studies 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 intend to become a U.S. citizen. Foreign exchange students and students aged 15 or older are not eligible.

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.

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**Entries for Illustrating America are judged on patriotic theme and technique.
The contest consists of three grade divisions: K-2, 3-5 and 6-8.**

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

**Department Auxiliary Awards in each grade division:
1st place-\$50, 2nd place-\$30, 3rd place-\$20**

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

Contest Rules:

- Entry must be completed during the current school year.
- Entry must be two dimensional.
- Entry must be on canvas or paper.
- Canvas entries must be submitted on a stretcher frame or canvas board.
- Paper entries must be reinforced with heavy paper or cardboard.
- Do not frame art with wood, metal, plastic or glass.
- Mats may be used including mounted and floating mats.
- Entries may not be smaller than 8"x10" and not larger than 18"x24" (**including mat**).
- Crayons, paint, glitter, marker, pastel, pencil, watercolor, mixed 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 number of stars and stripes.
- Completed entry form must be submitted with art entry.
- Student's name, age, and grade level must be printed on back of art entry.
- Parent or guardian signature required on contest entry form.
- **Coloring sheets, digital art, and photography are NOT accepted.**

National Youth Activities Program Awards:

1. Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most creative and/or unique VFW Auxiliary Lending Library.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send in the required entry form to the VFW Auxiliary Department Youth Activities Chairman by March 31, 2027 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from the VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

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 Groups Supporting our Veterans citations.
3. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary with the most creative and/or unique VFW Lending Library.
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.
9. Citations to VFW Auxiliaries that submitted a poster for the Combat the Stigma contest.