

AMERICANISM AMBASSADOR/ PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR

DIANA RUSSELL-MILTON

3725 Lily Hill Court
Antelope, CA 95843-5426
916-761-2406
diana9americanism@gmail.com

*We can do all things in the light,
that strengthens us in the waves.*

Respect For Our Flag

Patriotism begins at home. Let's show our patriotism this year and love for the American Flag. Many years ago, when joining the VFW Auxiliary, it reaffirmed my love for this country. It made me proud to be an American, flying the American Flag and seeing the flags on the Auxiliary meeting floor. Every time I march in, carrying the American Flag, I was walking with my head up and proud.

Americanism is an unfailing love of country, loyalty to its institutions and ideas, a desire to secure the blessing of liberty and posterity and an undivided allegiance to the Flag.

As a member of the Auxiliary, it is our duty to show our patriotism by supporting veterans, their families, volunteering in our communities, promoting patriotism and flying the American Flag.

Honoring and respecting the American Flag is significant for several reasons. It is a tribute to the sacrifices and service our veterans made, and it is a symbol of our national unity and identity.

I'm A Proud American. Why are you a proud American? How do we show our pride in America? Who are the proud Americans? ***Show Your Patriotism.***

Flag Education

Organize educational programs and workshops within your community to teach the proper etiquette for displaying and handling the American Flag. Partner with local schools, civic organizations and other groups to spread awareness about the significance of the Flag and its role in American history.

Establish a program for the respectful disposal of worn or damaged Flags. Set up collection points at local VFW posts or partner with other organizations to ensure that old Flags are properly retired according to the guidelines outlined by the U.S. Flag Code.

Promote Patriotism

Patriotic Symbols and Traditions: Educate others about the meaning and importance of patriotic symbols and traditions, including the American Flag, the National Anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance. Share tips on how to properly display and honor these symbols in daily life.

Spotlight on National Holidays: Provide information and ideas for celebrating national holidays like Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day. Include tips on how to organize and participate in local observances that reflect the significance of these holidays.

POW/MIA Remembrance

Prisoner of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) Remembrance Day is a solemn occasion dedicated to honoring the bravery and sacrifice of those who have endured captivity or remain unaccounted for while serving our nation. This day is crucial for recognizing the profound hardships faced by POWs, who suffered extreme conditions and personal anguish while separated from their loved ones. It also highlights the ongoing commitment

to account for those who are still missing, ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten. By observing this day, we reaffirm our collective responsibility to remember these heroes, support their families and uphold the values of honor and respect for all who have served in the defense of freedom.

Importance of Patriotic Instruction

The Patriotic Instructor is responsible for educating members about the history, symbolism and proper etiquette related to American patriotic symbols, particularly the American Flag. This education helps members understand the significance of these symbols and how to honor them appropriately. By sharing discussions, focused on Americanism in your Auxiliary meeting, the Patriotic Instructor can teach others to foster a deeper appreciation for the values and traditions that the VFW Auxiliary stands for. This role is crucial in promoting patriotism and ensuring that members uphold the principles of respect and honor for the nation.

Tools

Social Media Campaigns: Use social media platforms to share stories, events and patriotic messages. Use the current hashtags associated with the VFW Auxiliary to show other members how your Auxiliary is promoting patriotism. #AuxiliaryPatriotism.

Program QR Codes

QR Codes are used on just about everything. Members can use it as a talking point to explain about the VFW Auxiliary Americanism and patriotism. Most people will open it up and then they can find important information on the Americanism Program.





Flag Education • Promote #AuxiliaryPatriotism • POW/MIA Recognition • Star Family Recognition

The following definition of “Americanism” was originated by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, United Spanish War Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the National Commanders of the American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans of the World War at a conference held in Washington, D.C., in February 1927:

“Americanism is an unfailing love of country; loyalty to its institutions and ideals; eagerness to defend it against all enemies; undivided allegiance to the Flag; and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity.”

Patriotic Instructors/Americanism Chairman

The Patriotic Instructor educates members about the proper salute to the U.S. Flag, as well as the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. They also take the time to understand the VFW Auxiliary Ritual and the Federal Flag Code. They help members to understand the traditions and ceremonies of the organization. The *Understanding Auxiliary Traditions* help sheet and video are available in MALTA Member Resources.

For detailed information on Auxiliary traditions, rituals and patriotic ceremonies, reference the VFW Auxiliary *Podium Edition: Bylaws and Ritual*.

Flag Education

A large part of demonstrating Americanism and patriotic spirit is respecting and properly caring for the U.S. Flag. Flag etiquette covers everything from proper display of our Flag to acceptable conduct around this symbol of our nation.

For more information about Flag etiquette, the history of our Flag and to read the U.S. Flag Code, visit vfw.org/community/flag-etiquette.

Respect for the Flag - Engaging the Community

- Flag Education in Schools – Educating our youth about patriotism is an important step on the path to good citizenship. Encourage members of your Auxiliary to volunteer in schools and educate youth about the importance of respecting our Flag. Volunteers can visit individual classrooms or give a presentation at a school assembly. For more resources, see MALTA Member Resources.
- Recognition of Outstanding Community Flag Display – When a community member, business or organization takes the care and time to display our “Stars and Stripes,” it reinforces patriotism to the entire community. You may recognize this display of patriotism by presenting a certificate of appreciation from your Auxiliary.
- Flag Retirement Ceremonies – These ceremonies honoring our Flag serve as one of the most beautiful forms of respect for our country. This is the perfect way to involve the whole family of Auxiliary and VFW members. Flag retirement ceremonies can also serve as an event involving the entire community.
- Promote Patriotism – Celebrating Patriotic Holidays. Patriotic holidays are an opportune time to involve the whole family and bring community attention to your Auxiliary. Patriotic holidays and days of note can serve as the perfect way to show that your Auxiliary supports patriotism, veterans and their families as a top priority. A list of these dates can be found in MALTA.

For more information and guidance on Americanism and Patriotism, including Patriotic Instructor duties, patriotic days, Americanism Helpful Hints, branches of service birth dates, military flags order of precedence and Star Family recognition, see MALTA Member Resources.

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Program

Each year the VFW recognizes three exceptional teachers - one each from the elementary, junior high and high school levels - for their outstanding commitment to teach Americanism and instill patriotism in their students.

For more information, visit:
<https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/teacher-of-the-year>

Patriotic items and educational materials are available for purchase through the VFW Store at 1-833-VFW-VETS or online at vfwstore.org.

AMERICANISM PROGRAM AWARDS

Awards for Auxiliaries:

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event displaying or educating others about proper ways to display and respect the American Flag.
 - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event educating others about proper ways to display and respect the American Flag.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Americanism Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department Americanism Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Americanism Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Americanism Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions who demonstrates exceptional dedication and creativity in promoting the proper display and respect for the American Flag during VFW Auxiliary meetings.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 9.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.