

YOUTH ACTIVITIES AMBASSADOR



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As a member who has been involved with the Auxiliary since I was a 5-year-old Junior Girl, I feel that being involved at a young age not only helps grow our membership, but teaches children what it means to be involved, patriotic and an American. It also teaches youth who our men and women of strength are.

Our children are the future leaders of this organization; if we get them involved now it won't be as hard to get them to join when they are 16 years old. So how do we get them involved and teach them about our great organization?

Youth Reading to our Veterans & Veterans Reading to Youth:

Reading is a big part of growing up and learning. Many students have nightly reading starting at a young age in school. Sometimes just talking to the students about patriotism, America and our country can be dull. But taking the students on a journey in a book might capture their attention more and open their minds up. Let the little ones see what Frances Scott Key saw as he wrote the "Star-Spangled Banner," or how brave George Washington looked on this horse as our first president.

So how do we do that? If you go onto MALTA Member Resources, under Youth Activities we have the Patriotism through Literacy list. It is even divided up by grade levels. Pick some books from there.

Visit your local library and see if they are in stock; if not maybe see if you can donate some books off the list or even leave the list with them.

These books aren't just for venturing off into another time or reading a good story, they are to educate our students about patriotism, the Flag and our country. These books can also be found in bookstores, online and possibly even as e-books.

Through books, not only are children learning about our country and patriotism but creating a love for 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 book from the Patriotism through Literacy list.
- When visiting a VA or nursing home see if the staff can set up a reading area for the children to read to the veterans or for the veterans to read to them.
- Create a read-a-thon, use R.A.P. Cards as the point system.

September 6, 2024 is National Read a Book Day. If possible, celebrate that day by hosting veterans and children at your post. Another big reading day in the classroom is Dr. Seuss Day happening on March 2, 2025. Check with your schools if veterans can go into the classroom so the students can read to them and vice versa.

Youth Groups:

Educating our youth not only about our organization, but about America, patriotism, our veterans and volunteering. In the Youth Activities Program, we have something for every age group. There are many youth groups within our schools and community that we can support, sponsor and work with. These may include the following:

- The Scouts
- Church Youth Groups
- Boys & Girls Club
- School Sponsored Groups
- JROTC

High school students can use volunteer hours for college applications; some colleges require letters of recommendation.

How do we get them involved?

- Placing 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

If children can help at an event, involve and engage them. Always remember to act responsibly and respectfully around youth. They are looking up to you and learning from you.

After they have helped, recognize them for a job well done and their accomplishments. We have fillable Patriotic Youth Awards behind the Member Resources in MALTA.

Illustrating America:

We all know the look in a child’s eyes when their “masterpiece” is fridge-worthy. Learn more about Illustrating America on Page 56-57.

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

Children like to be told they are doing a good job. Praising a child can go a long way and it helps boost their confidence. When a child shows Random Acts of Patriotism, recognize them by giving them a card and explain to them why they are receiving it.

Create a reward system for the cards, each card is worth so many points. The points can help them win books, a soda, a prize, candy and movie tickets.

The Card template is located in MALTA Member Resources, Youth Activities.



YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Sponsoring and Working with Youth Groups Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citations • Patriotic Youth Award Patriotism through Literacy • Illustrating America

The VFW Auxiliary is in a unique position to help teach our youth the skills to become responsible adults through serving our country, communities and veterans. We have a new generation of veterans who need the support of family, friends and country as they serve overseas and when they come home from conflicts abroad. Today's youth are the future of our nation.

Sponsoring and Working with Youth Groups

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

Take advantage of the service aspects some youth groups require. Many youth-focused organizations require various types of community service or activities to earn merits in their units. College-bound seniors earn school credit for some of these same activities.

Remember that involving youth in service to veterans in conjunction with your Auxiliary can bring new membership to your Auxiliary. When youth and the whole family are included, members feel more invested in your Auxiliary. Sponsorship of a youth group can create a bright future for your Auxiliary, veterans and the community as a whole.

Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citations

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

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 of reading that can lead to a lifetime of learning.

Benefits of Patriotism through Literacy:

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

How can I participate in Patriotism through Literacy?

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

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

Illustrating America

Open to any student in grades K-8 by the 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 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 age 15 or older are ineligible. National grade division winners of previous Illustrating America contests may enter the subsequent grade division but are ineligible for the same grade division 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 first, second and third place in each grade division. The first, second and third place entry in each grade division will be displayed at 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:

Entries received by:

Local Auxiliary – March 31

Department – April 15

National Headquarters – May 5

Contest Rules:

- Entry must be completed during the current school year.
- Entry must be two dimensional.
- Entry must be on canvas or paper.
- Submit canvas entries on a stretcher frame or canvas board.
- Reinforce the back with heavy paper.
- Do not frame art with wood, metal, plastic or glass.
- Mats, including mounted and floating mats, may be used.
- Entries may not be smaller than 8" x 10" and not larger than 18" x 24", **INCLUDING mat.**
- Watercolor, pencil, pastel, charcoal, tempera, crayon, acrylic, pen, ink, oil, glitter, marker or other media may be used.
- If the American Flag is used, it **DOES NOT** need to conform to the Federal Flag Code in relation to colors or numbers of stars and stripes.
- Complete contest entry form and submit with art entry.
- Parent or guardian signature required on contest entry form.
- **Coloring sheets, digital art and photography and are NOT accepted.**

Involve Youth in ALL Auxiliary Programs

Youth play such an important role in our future. Encourage involvement from an early age in all Auxiliary Programs. Every young person can find their place to serve when they are presented with a variety of opportunities to serve their communities and veterans.

Teach youth about Auxiliary efforts to:

- Respect and take pride in our country.
- Serve hospitalized veterans.
- Elect leaders who appreciate our military.
- Pass legislation that secures benefits for our veterans. And many other worthy efforts!

Project Examples

- Visiting and volunteering in VA and non-VA facilities. Raising funds for a community veterans memorial. Marching in patriotic holiday parades.
- Volunteering to help veterans and service members and their families with yard work or household repairs. Sending cards or small gifts to the VFW National Home to support families.
- Planning a card- and letter-writing campaign in local schools to send mail to our troops overseas or veterans in VA facilities.
- Organizing assembly, collection and delivery of care packages for troops.
- Teaching computer skills to veterans.

Youth Group Examples for VFW Auxiliary Sponsorship

- Youth sports teams
- Church youth groups
- After-school programs
- Youth-focused organizations
- School clubs
- Home-school associations
- Youth community service groups
- Nonprofit organization youth advisory councils
- Service learning and civic engagement departments in high schools and colleges

Make Your Auxiliary Accessible to Today's Youth

It has never been so easy to communicate your cause and events to the world. Social media as teaching and information tools have natural collaborative elements allowing our youth to view and comment on each other's activities. They are tweeting on Twitter, posting on Facebook, instantly sending pictures on Instagram and subscribing to YouTube channels. If you don't know what any of this is – LEARN.

Popular Social Media Networks.

Facebook | Twitter | LinkedIn | YouTube
Pinterest | Instagram | Snapchat
Get online and see what's new!

Visit MALTA Member Resources for publicity tips, social media guidelines and other helpful information.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM AWARDS

Awards for Auxiliaries

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event of youth reading to veterans and/or veterans reading to youth.
 - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most outstanding activity and/or event of youth reading to veterans and/or veterans reading to youth.

Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources. VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to their Department Youth Activities Chairman by March 31, 2025 for judging. The Department Youth Activities Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Youth Activities Ambassador by April 30, 2025 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2025 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Youth Activities Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of implementing youth reading to veterans and/or veterans reading to youth.
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 56.

Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2025 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Columbus, Ohio.