

YOUTH ACTIVITIES AMBASSADOR



DEBBIE LITTLE

My very first Department Program was Youth Activities. I was so excited to be a part of this bigger picture, which is the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary. I was thrilled when I placed first in our division and walked across the National stage to receive my award. It was amazing to reach out to the youth in my community. Through this Chairmanship, I realized that our youth are eager to be part of patriotism in America and are like sponges soaking up all the information we provide to them.

VFW Auxiliary Lending Library

Start a VFW Auxiliary Lending Library in your community. Not every community has a local library, but your Auxiliary can bring books to kids with this new initiative called the VFW Auxiliary Lending Library. What is the VFW Auxiliary Lending Library? This effort will see Auxiliaries create and institute their own lending libraries where children can borrow reading materials. Members can work together to see how best these libraries will work in your community. The libraries can be placed anywhere (with proper approval, of course): outside your Post, at the community center, baseball field, city hall, Moose, Elks or Masons lodges. Your Auxiliary could give a child an opportunity to further expand their imagination by reading. They can be easy to assemble; outdoor library boxes can be found on Amazon and other online retailers. For the extra industrious, reach out to your local high school woodshop teacher and see if they would be interested in making it a school project.

Stock your library with selections from the Patriotism Through Literacy reading list found on the National website. Reach out to your schools to find the different reading levels to stock your library with. Approximately 61% of low-income families do not have any children's books in their homes. Because of this lack of access, these children can suffer lower reading scores and a greater likelihood of struggling in school. By starting a VFW Auxiliary Lending Library with an emphasis on youth books, your Auxiliary can make a difference.

Remember these tips to build your library project:

- Take a book. Share a book.
- Organize a reading to youth event at your VFW Post
- Contact a youth group, Scouts and high school clubs for help and advice on building your library.
- Use the #auxlendinglibrary to promote what you are doing for the VFW Auxiliary Lending Library project.

Illustrating America

Important reminder: There are several **CHANGES** this year to the **DUE DATES** for the Illustrating America contest. The Illustrating America schedule starting for the 2026-2027 year is:

December 15 (2026): Illustrating America student entries are due to participating/sponsoring VFW Auxiliary for judging.

January (2027): Optional first-place Illustrating America winner in each grade division from each participating sponsoring VFW Auxiliary are due to VFW Auxiliary District for judging.

January 15: Illustrating America first-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: Illustrating America first-place winner in each grade division from each VFW Auxiliary Department must be received at VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters for judging.

Make sure you advise your Auxiliaries of the date changes. The youth participating today in our Illustrating America contest may be the youth that participate in Young American Creative Patriotic Art and 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contests later. Reach out to your local elementary and middle schools with the information early in the school year. Talk to teachers, see if they will incorporate the contest as a class project. This contest shows the community that the VFW Auxiliary is engaged in promoting patriotism among our youth.

Youth Groups

How many youth groups do you have in your community? There are so many youth groups out there for us to explore and work with. Scouting America, 4-H, the National FFA Organization, Future Business Leaders of America, YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National Honor Society, Toastmasters and so many more.

Invite youth groups to join in Auxiliary activities under the supervision of their adult group leader(s) and/or parents/guardians including:

- Serving and bussing tables for fundraising dinners.
- Participating in holidays and activities at nursing homes.
- Organizing a military night during a local football game.
- Building your Little Free Library and stocking it with books.

R.A.P. Recognition & Youth Acts Of Kindness

This is one of the easiest ways to recognize our youth when you witness their Random Acts of Patriotism. Have an R.A.P. card available to hand out immediately when you see that act of Patriotism. Recognize patriotic youth activities with a certificate at a school assembly. Become part of the school awards

program, present certificates for the Patriotic Youth Award and the Youth Acts of Kindness Certificate. Celebrate our youth by acknowledging their patriotic deeds. Find these fillable/printable resources in MALTA Member Resources.

For more details on the Youth Activities Program Awards, see page 66.





YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Sponsoring and Working with Youth Groups • 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 VFW Auxiliary Youth Activities Program, a VFW 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 VFW Auxiliary can bring new membership to your VFW Auxiliary. When youth and the whole family are included, members feel more invested in your VFW Auxiliary. Sponsorship of a youth group can create a bright future for your VFW 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 VFW 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 VFW 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 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 VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters.

There are National awards for first, second and third place in each grade division.

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" x 10" and not larger than 18" x 24", **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 numbers of stars and stripes.
- Completed contest 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.**

Deadlines:

Entries received by:

VFW Auxiliary – December 15

District – (Optional)

Department – January 15

National Headquarters – January 31

Official form, details on requirements and contest rules can be found in MALTA Member Resources or on the VFW Auxiliary website.

Involve Youth in ALL Auxiliary Programs

Youth play such an important role in our future. Encourage involvement from an early age in all VFW 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 VFW Auxiliary efforts to respect and take pride in our country.

Project Examples

- Marching in patriotic holiday parades.
- Help veterans, 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 card- and letter-writing events 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.
- Visiting and volunteering in VA and non-VA facilities.

Youth Group Examples for VFW Auxiliary Sponsorship

- Youth sports teams and church youth groups
- School clubs and after-school programs
- Home-school associations
- Youth community service groups
- Service learning and civic engagement departments in high schools

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 X, posting on Facebook, instantly sending pictures on Instagram and Snapchat and subscribing to YouTube channels. Get online and see what's new!

VFW Scout of the Year Program

Some of our earliest ties to the community involve youth groups and perhaps 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>

YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM AWARDS

Awards for Auxiliaries:

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

The VFW Auxiliary Department Youth Activities Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the VFW Auxiliary National Youth Activities Ambassador by April 30, 2027 for judging.

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

Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:

1. Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary Department Youth Activities Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of the VFW Auxiliary Lending Library initiative.

Winners will be announced, and citations will be presented at the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention. Money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary Department account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention for distribution to the winning VFW Auxiliary Department Chairmen.

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 Ambassador's Program goals.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention. Money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary Department account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.