

**Youth Activities
Department SOI
August 23, 2025
Arkansas City, KS**

When was the last time you took a walk on the beach.....let the sand squish between your toes.....and picked up seashells along the way? What did you look for in the shells? Were any the same?? Just like our Youth today...none are the same yet, they are all beautiful with a story to tell....Yes....this year you will be collecting sea shells along the way as you participate in Youth Activities.

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. Today's youth is the future of our organization.....so how are we going to use them.....I will tell you!

1) Reading Buddies..We sometimes forget that we have many children that are being left behind in schools due to issues concerning reading and comprehension, but if just one person in each Auxiliary could reach out and help a child become a better reader through reading one-on-one or electronically, imagine what an impact we could make in their daily lives and self confidence. You can use the Patriotism Through Literacy reading list in MALTA or talk with the child's parent, teacher, or guardian that you have buddied up with to help find out what their interests are and what reading level books to look for. Contact your local schools and after-school program coordinators to see if they need volunteers to help read with the children.

- 1) Volunteer to help read with kids**
- 2) Hold a Reading Buddy Day at your VFW Post**
- 3) Be a Reading Buddy by using zoom or the telephone.**
- 4) Use the #auxreadingbuddy to promote what you and your Auxiliary are doing in our Reading Buddy program.**

Always make sure you get proper permission from the schools and parents/guardians also attend the Reading Buddy Posts events.

Participation in the Reading Buddy Program=10 sea shells.

2) Youth Groups—The VFW Auxiliary is no stranger to working and assisting today's many different 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.

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.

Each youth Group sponsored=5 sea shells

3) The Illustrating America Contest is a phenomenal way to get our younger students, and their families interested in learning more about what the VFW Auxiliary does for our heroes and communities.

This is a Patriotic Art Contest for ages: K-2nd grade, 3-5th grade, and 6-8th grade. Entries are judged on Patriotic theme and technique. Due date is March 31st to your local Auxiliary, April 15th for Department, and May 5th to National Headquarters.

Department 1st place winners in each category are sent to National for Judging-top 3 places will go on to the National Convention. Participation in this program= 1 sea shell per student entry.

4) Youth Groups Supporting our Veterans Citations 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. Each citation given=5 sea shells.

5) 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. Each award given out=5 sea shells.

6) R.A.P. Cards and Youth Acts of Kindness Certificates- Encouraging today's youth by letting them know that they have been seen is priceless in their eyes. I want to encourage you and your Auxiliary to use Random Acts of Patriotism cards for children that you see:

- *Showing respect for the flag**
- *Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance**
- *Honoring our country and Heroes**

But this year I would also like to see our Auxiliaries using the Youth Acts of Kindness Certificates which is available in MALTA Member Resources. (It is the same criteria as receiving RAP cards). This is just another way to celebrate our Youth and to let them know that we see them. For each RAP card or Certificate issued= 1 sea shell for each.

7) Patriotism Through Literacy supports and promotes 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 nations history.**

***Foster a love of reading that can lead to a lifetime of learning**

***Volunteer to read historical or creative nonfiction picture books to kids at your local library.**

***Donate historical or creative nonfiction books to local schools, shelters, or libraries.**

For every book read or donated= 1 sea shell per book

Involve Youth in ALL Auxiliary Programs as they play such of an important role in our future. Encourage involvement from an early age in all Auxiliary Programs. Every young person can find their place 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.

AWARDS

National—

- 1. Most creative and/or unique activity and/or event of the VFW Auxiliary working with a youth group.**

***Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions**

***Entry form is required and is available in MALTA Member Resources**

***Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Youth Activities Chairman (me) by March 31st 2026 for judging. The winning entry will be sent to the National Ambassador for the April 30th, 2026 judging.**

***Citations will be sent directly to the winning Auxiliary and the money will be deposited into the winning Auxiliary's account following the 2026 National Convention.**

Department—

- 1. Citation to those donating at least 1 book to a library, school, or other facility.**
- 2. Citations to those participating in the Illustrating America Contest**
- 3. Monetary awards to the top 3 Auxiliaries in each Membership group with the Best Reading Buddy Activity**
- 4. Citations to the top 5 Auxiliaries using the most youth**
- 5. Monetary award to the top 3 Auxiliaries in each Membership group with the most sea shells collected.**

So get your feet ready as you go after our youth to start collecting those precious sea shells. Whether on sand, water, or land...our youth are ready and willing.....and have a lot to offer to our organization and to our Veterans and their families. The possibilities run as far and wide as the ocean view.

Marsha LaRosh

Dept. Youth Activity Chairman

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