

YOUTH ACTIVITIES AMBASSADOR



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How to define patriotism for youth: "...love for or devotion to one's country."

When was the first time you were introduced to our Flag? I remember my first encounter: I was 5 years old, very excited about going to school for the first time and beginning the first grade; Mrs. Kinlock was my teacher. The very first thing we did was learn the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. I was so excited that I could not wait to tell my mom and dad about this new accomplishment. That was my first introduction to PATRIOTISM. Do you remember yours?

Focusing attention on our youth beginning at a young age is vital in order for them to appreciate our history and our veterans' sacrifices who have fought and died to keep our freedoms. We, as members of the VFW Auxiliary, can start by reaching out to them as young as 5 years old. Our youth today are our leaders of tomorrow, our soldiers of tomorrow, our teachers and doctors, and yes, even our Auxiliary members of tomorrow. Education is key to helping our youth become who they will be tomorrow.

Patriotism through Literacy

One of the easiest ways to promote patriotism is through reading among our youth. It is simple, fun and free (if using a library.) We need to educate our youth at an early age about who our historical figures were that helped to build this great country, the United States of America.

Beginning with our youngest youth, kindergartners, first- and second- graders, we can instill in them the importance of our Flag, how our country was formed, why we say the Pledge, who our first President was in addition to the many other historical images and facts. Introducing historical events through literature is

priceless. Libraries are important to every young person, whether it is their school library, their community library or their school room library available through their teacher. Teaching patriotism through literature is just one step toward understanding and learning about patriotism.

Examples of books for youth:

- America the Beautiful by Cholena Rose Dare (ages 3-6)
- The Night Before the Fourth of July by Natasha Wing (ages 3-5)
- Fourth of July (Holidays in Rhythm and Rhyme) by Emma Carlson Berne (ages 5-7)
- The Fourth of July Story by Alice Dalgleish (ages 4-8)
- Fireworks, Picnics, and Flags by James Cross Giblin (ages 10-12)
- What Does It Mean to be American? By Rana DiOrio (ages 4-8).
- Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out created by the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance with 110 Renowned Authors and Illustrators
- A Patriot's Handbook, Songs, Poems, Stories, and Speeches Celebrating the Land We Love, illustrated and introduced by Caroline Kennedy

These books and other patriotic books are available at your nearest bookstore, or you can purchase from online retailers.

Benefits

- Books teach youth about various events in our American history.
- Books foster a love of lifetime learning through reading.
- Helps our youth to better understand our American history.
- Improves grammar, writing skills and concentration.

Participation:

- Volunteer to read historical fiction to youth at your local library.
- Donate historical fiction to your local school libraries, community libraries or shelters.
- Host a read-a-thon and award prizes for the number of books read. Prizes could be a book for them to take home or stickers or pins.

R.A.P. Cards

Our youth love awards for a job well done, good grades, etc. and what better award to receive? None other than our very own VFW Auxiliary R.A.P. card! We can explain to those receiving the card what the acronym "R.A.P." stands for: RANDOM ACTS OF PATRIOTISM.

- Have you observed youth showing patriotism?
- Have you seen a child thanking a veteran?
- Have you witnessed a child or youth place their hand over their heart correctly?
- Have you seen a child or youth show respect to our American Flag?

If so, give them a R.A.P. card. These cards are so easy to give out to those youth demonstrating patriotism within your community. Go to MALTA Member Resources, Youth Activities, to locate a template to print out. Try this fun and unique way to engage youth and encourage their patriotism.

Supporting and Working with Youth Groups

Now that we have established how we can start teaching patriotism to our smaller youth, let's not forget about our older youth. Those in middle or junior high school need us to continue guiding them to learn about patriotism. This can be accomplished by helping to create and support youth groups within our community. Activities that assist and work with veterans and their families provide a vital source of community involvement for youth groups. The Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, church youth groups, Boys and Girls Clubs of America and school-sponsored clubs are just a few groups that can benefit from our involvement.

Show these youth that we care. Invite a group to participate in some of our Auxiliary activities:

- Deliver groceries to a disabled veteran.
- Help a veteran with yard work.
- Take trash out for curbside pickup.
- Visit nursing homes or hospitals.
- Reading to youth.

These activities will not only teach young people to learn about community service, but they may also receive participation hours for badges or other awards from their youth group. Encourage youth to talk to a veteran and ask about that veteran's service to our country thereby learning about patriotism through a

veteran's perspective. We must continue to show our love and respect for our veterans and our country, and we can do so by emphasizing patriotism to the youth of tomorrow.

Honoring individual youth for their patriotism and/or their support of veterans, service members and their families can be accomplished by presenting them with a patriotic youth award. A fillable, printable version of this award is available in MALTA Member Resources, Youth Activities.

Get Excited for the Red, White and Blue!

It is so inspiring to listen to our youth sing our national anthem. The Auxiliary sponsors a singing contest for youth in grades K-12 that is divided into two grade divisions: K-8 and 9-12. Entries will be judged on vocal ability, mastery of lyrics, originality or interpretation and entertainment value.

The first-place winner from each Department in each grade division will be forwarded to Auxiliary Headquarters. There will be one National winner in each grade division with awards for first, second and third place in each division. Entry forms are located in MALTA Member Resources, Youth Activities and contains eligibility requirements, contest rules and deadlines.

Illustrating America

Another way to encourage patriotism in youth is to participate in Illustrating America. The contest is open to any student in grades K-8 who is enrolled in public, private or parochial school or a home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions; or who are dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. However, foreign exchange students and students 15-years or older are ineligible. There are three grade divisions: K-2, 3-5 and 6-8. National grade division winners of previous Illustrating America contests may enter the next grade division but are ineligible for the same grade division of which they are a previous winner.

The Department first-place winner in each grade division will be sent to National Headquarters. For more details on requirements and contest rules and the student brochure and entry form, consult MALTA Member Resources, Youth Activities.



YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Sponsoring and Working with Youth Groups

Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citations • Patriotic Youth Award

Get Excited for the Red, White and Blue! • 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.

Get Excited for the Red, White and Blue!

Open to youth in grades K-12 at the time of local entry and a U.S. citizen or U.S. national. Entry will be judged on vocal ability, mastery of lyrics, originality or interpretation and entertainment value. The contest consists of two grade divisions: K-8 and 9-12. The Department first-place winner in each grade division will be forwarded to Auxiliary National Headquarters. There is one National winner in each grade division, with awards for first, second and third place in each grade division. Please see entry form in MALTA Member Resources under Youth Activities for eligibility requirements and contest rules.

Deadlines:

Entries received by:

Participating Auxiliary – March 31

Department – April 15

National Headquarters – May 5

Contest Rules:

- Video of contestant's solo vocal performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" must be recorded between July 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024.
- Performance must be saved as a YouTube video.
- Contestant may sing a cappella, with backing tracks or instruments.
- Contestant may sing in the arrangement and style of their choice.
- Contestant may NOT change the words.

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:

- Art must be two-dimensional.
- Art must be on canvas or paper.
- Watercolor, pencil, pastel, charcoal, tempera, crayon, acrylic, pen, ink, oil, marker or other media may be used.
- Submit canvas entries on a stretcher frame or canvas board. Other entries, if matted, must be matted in white or reinforced with heavy paper.
- The art should be no smaller than 8" x 10" but no larger than 18" x 24", not including mat.
- **Coloring sheets, digital art and photography 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 educating their community about Patriotism Through Literacy and utilizing the Random Act of Patriotism card (R.A.P.)
- Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and/or event that educates their community about Patriotism Through Literacy and utilizes the Random Act of Patriotism card (R.A.P.) Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources. Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Youth Activities Chairman by March 31, 2024 for judging.

The Department Youth Activities Chairman must email National Headquarters by April 30, 2024 at info@vfwauxiliary.org a total combined list of every Auxiliary in their Department that completed and submitted an entry form.

Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.

- Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event that educates their community about Patriotism Through Literacy and utilizes the Random Act of Patriotism card (R.A.P.)

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, 2024 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into Auxiliary account after 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 Patriotism Through Literacy and utilizes the Random Act of Patriotism card (R.A.P.) Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2024 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.
2. Outstanding Performance Award 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 64. Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2024 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.