



Carolyn Day Essay Contest 2026

(Now renamed for the visionary behind the Veterans Memorial)
Sponsored by The Historical Society of Orange Park
P.O. Box 08, Orange Park, FL 32067
Email: info@ophistory.org



I. Contest Label Form and Publicity Release Form: All entries must be accompanied by a fully completed "Publicity Release Form." One overall contest label form should be completed for each school sending bulk entries.

II. Contest Theme: This must be an essay about veterans and Veterans Day. Each Essay Contest student, using his or her own words and creativity, should think about how veterans have made an impact in their own life, neighborhood, or town. They should clearly address the prompt chosen for their age group.

III. Contest Deadline: All essay entries must be received by Wednesday, September 30, 2026. Winners will be notified by October 30, 2026. Entries that do not meet deadlines will be disqualified.

IV. Contest Grade Categories and Topics: The 2026 topics for three grade level competitions are listed below. The contests will be evaluated in the following grade-related categories:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Word limits</u>	<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Prize Offered:</u>
4 th -6 th	300 -500	"A Letter to a Veteran"	\$50
Elem. prompt: Imagine you are writing a letter to a veteran. What would you thank them for, and what questions would you want to ask about their service?			
7 th -8 th	400-700	"Women in Service"	\$75
Jr. High prompt: Explore the role of women in the Armed Forces throughout history. Track the challenges and successes that define women in the military.			
9 th -12 th	800-1000	"How Veterans Shape the American Story"	\$100
HS Prompt: Choose a major conflict or era and analyze how veterans influenced political, social, and cultural change afterward. Consider things like civil rights, technology, public policy and community leadership. Or... Create your own prompt expressing respect and gratitude for military service.			

V. Essay Specifications: Essay entries can be electronically written (Word or Docs) or handwritten neatly on white 8½" X 11" lined paper and must be in English. **Please have students write on one side of the paper only. Handwriting on entries should be dark enough to be reproduced so that the judges will have a good copy to read.** Please use ink, not pencil. All essays must be the work of only one (1) student, consisting of the student's own words, thoughts, and creativity. Electronic submissions are accepted. Teachers may choose to scan all their entries per school to submit as one PDF. Note: Upon submission, all essays become the property of the Historical Society of Orange Park.

Eligibility: The contest is open to students in Grades 4-12 who are enrolled in public and private schools and home-schooled students living in Clay County, Florida.

VI. Judging: The decision of the adjudication panel is final. Each essay will be judged by rubric: Understanding of the prompt (50%), Content of writing (25%) Creativity of writing (25%).

VII. Awards: Two student finalists from each of the three grade categories will be awarded a certificate of merit. The winning student from each grade category will be presented with a special plaque and a check during the town's annual live Veterans Day event.

Students winning in each first-place grade level will be asked to read their essays as part of the town's Veterans Day ceremony at the Magnolia Cemetery's Veterans Memorial, 1040 Kingsley Avenue, Orange Park, on Wednesday, 11/11/2026, arriving by 10:45 AM for the ceremony which starts at 11 AM. Runners-up will be recognized.

Note: The Historical Society assumes no responsibility for essay submissions. Winning entrants agree that the Historical Society of Orange Park has the right to use, without further permission and/or compensation, their essays for promotion of Veterans Day, or any other related use. The submissions will not be returned.



Carolyn Day Essay Contest 2026

Publicity Release Form

(Now renamed for the visionary behind the memorial)
Sponsored by The Historical Society of Orange Park



PLEASE COMPLETE ENTIRE FORM AND PRINT NEATLY

Mail to: Cynthia Cheatwood

Email questions to: info@ophistory.org

Historical Society of Orange Park, Inc.

P.O. Box 08, Orange Park, FL 32067

Entries must be received by September 30, 2026.

Entries can also be scanned and emailed to ccheatwood@myyahoo.com or mailed to our PO box.

Student Information (please use an ink pen)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

(Please print carefully so we send information to the correct account)

Teacher/School Information

Name of School: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

Teacher's Phone (day): _____ **Teacher Email:** _____

I have read the contest guidelines and affirm that this entry is in compliance with them. Entries must be original work, created by the student during the current school year, never have been published in any other medium, and the entrant must own all rights to reproduce the entries in any medium without restriction. All expenses involved in preparing and submitting an entry are the entrant's. Entry into this contest constitutes permission for the essay and author, to be photographed for publicity purposes and for the work to be reproduced in any medium without time, use or territorial limitation as long as such is for noncommercial purposes without any additional compensation to the child, teacher, parents, or legal guardians. All federal, state, and local regulations apply. Void where prohibited by law.

Signature of Contestant: _____ Date: _____

Parent or Guardian's Signature: _____



Carolyn Day Essay Contest 2026

(Now renamed for the visionary behind the memorial)
Sponsored by The Historical Society of Orange Park



Contest Label Form for Teachers

PLEASE COMPLETE ENTIRE FORM AND PRINT NEATLY
(1 batch sheet per school)

Entries must be received by September 30, 2026.

Teachers sending in batches of essays (please limit to 25 per school), complete this form and paperclip/ rubber band it with the bundle of printed entries. Please do not staple.

If you are submitting scans of the essays, please be sure they can be read clearly once scanned and include a scan of this completed form with your school's entries. Entries written in light pencil that cannot be read when scanned will not be considered.

Number of entries in batch: _____ **Entry Level:** Elem. _____ Jr. High _____ High _____

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

School Telephone: _____

Sponsoring Teacher's Name (if applicable): _____

Teacher's Contact Info (email or phone extension): _____

First Place-winning students and runner-up should plan to meet representatives of the Society at the site of the Veterans Memorial at 1040 Kingsley Avenue (across from Clarke Park), near the entrance of Magnolia Cemetery on Monday, November 11th for our ceremony. All are free to bring family members and there will be some great photo ops. First place winners at each level (Elementary, JH, SH) will read their essays. We ask that they dress nicely and arrive by 10:45 am. Certificates, plaques and checks will be presented at that time. Seats will fill up fast so you may want to have your family members bring fold-out chairs, if you have them. Bringing lawn chairs is encouraged. Members of the press will be on hand as well and may want to ask students for comments.

Email questions or scanned entry submissions can be sent to: ccheatwood@myyahoo.com