**Youth Activities**

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**“Today’s Youth are the Future of our Nation”**

We, the VFW Auxiliary, **must** continue to help teach our youth the skills they need to become responsible adults through serving our country, communities and our Veterans. Our Youth needs to be taught patriotism in our schools, in their homes or in any other organization of which they may be involved. They need to know from where they receive their freedoms. We need to help them to **“Respect…Honor…Remember”**our Veterans & have “**Hands that Serve, Hearts that Care”.**

**PRIORITY GOALS for 2022-2023 are as follows:**

**Creating, 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

**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 at vfwauxiliary.org/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. Please see entry form at vfwauxiliary.org/ what-we-do/youth-activities. Must be submitted to Auxiliary by March 31, 2023.

 Contest Rules:

• Video of contestant’s solo vocal performance of “The Star-Spangled Banner” must be

 recorded between July 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023.

• Contestant may sing a cappella, with backing tracks or instruments.

• Contestant may sing in the arrangement and genre 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.

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.

**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. Student must be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national. Foreign exchange students and students aged 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.

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 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.

**Grave Beautification**

 Honoring veterans shouldn’t cease upon death. Whether they die in battle or after living a long life, they continue to deserve our respect and remembrance. Teaching this to our youth can be accomplished by beautifying the gravesites and headstones of our veterans. While cemeteries take care of general lawn maintenance, often they do not clean the headstones. Organize an event for youth to clean and beautify the gravesites of veterans at a national, private, or municipal cemetery.

* The first step is to approach the cemetery for permission to beautify headstones and markers.
* Access the VA’s National Cemetery Administration’s guidelines for cleaning headstones and markers at https://www.cem.va.gov/hmm/cleaning.asp. Here you will find detailed information regarding acceptable cleaning practices. Please follow these instructions to avoid causing damage or harm to the participants or the headstones.
* Refer to YouTube for videos demonstrating safe practices.

Requirements for Reporting

1. Take a before and after picture of every headstone.

2. Keep a log of gravesites beautified during your event. Record the names of veterans in the log with the name of the cemetery, including town/ city and state.

3. Place a Flag on the gravesites. Follow the guidelines of individual cemeteries before placing a Flag holder near the headstone. Civilian cemeteries may prefer the placement of Flags on wood sticks that are placed directly in the ground. If allowed, create Flag holders using PVC pipe: o Cut ½ inch PVC pipe to appropriate length. o Placement of the pipe is one combat boot length (10”) from the front of the headstone in the center. o Once pipe is placed, insert Flag in pipe. o Always step back and check to see if the Flag is straight.

**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 | TikTok Get online and see what’s new! Visit vfwauxiliary.org/resources for publicity tips, social media guidelines and other helpful tips.

**YOUTH ACTIVITIES AWARDS**

1. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary working with the highest number of Youth
2. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary presenting the most Youth Group Supporting Our Veterans Citations
3. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary with the Best Promotion of the Patriotism through Literacy Initiative
4. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary with the Best Promotion of the “Get Excited for the Red, White & Blue” Initiative
5. Citations to the VFW Auxiliaries sponsoring the first-place winners in each division of the “Get Excited for the Red, White & Blue” Initiative
6. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary with the Best Promotion of the “Illustrating America” Initiative
7. Citations to the VFW Auxiliaries sponsoring the first-place winners in each division of the “Illustrating America” Initiative
8. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary with the Most Outstanding “Veteran Grave Beautification” activity and/or event with Youth involvement

**ALL OBLIGATIONS INCLUDING AUDITS, BONDS, DELEGATE FEES, PLEDGES, SUPPLIES, ETC. TO NATIONAL, DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS AND DISTRICT MUST BE MET FOR YOUR AUXILIARY/DISTRICT PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMEN TO QUALIFY FOR AWARDS.**