



VFW SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS CHAIRMAN'S MANUAL

The Role of the Chairman

VFW's chairmen do more than just plan projects to improve their communities. They also recruit volunteers, build relationships with community leaders, organize partnerships with civic groups, and promote the VFW.

You Are the Point Person

A program chairman should understand one important fact right from the outset: You are the Post's point man in your community. As chairman you will be your Post's liaison to:

- school teachers and administrators
- community leaders
- local military personnel
- city government officials
- members of civic groups
- members of the media
- your fellow veterans

Seek out these new relationships. When it comes time to recruit volunteers or you need specialized expertise for Post projects, these community contacts will prove invaluable.

Project an outgoing, friendly personality. Speak positively about your Post, your community and your projects. Articulate your thoughts and plans clearly, concisely and coherently. Remember, you represent not only your Post, but the entire VFW organization as well.

Reporting Your Activities

You may have heard it said that "the job's not over until the paperwork is done!" That is especially true of VFW Programs.

Chairman must report their Post activities in their respective areas at least twice each year. Check

with your respective Department chairman to learn what should be reported and in what form. Documentation of your programmatic efforts is the thing that ensures the VFW's reputation and our not-for-profit status.

Master Organizational Skills

As chairman, your talents must be varied. Consequently, your organizational skills should be fully developed.

Some of your specific duties include:

- recruiting and maintaining a pool of active volunteers
- identifying and initiating programs needed in your community
- motivating your Post members, community volunteers and sponsors involved in your various projects
- recognizing your volunteers efforts
- organizing and maintaining records, photos and newspaper clippings the document your activities
- reporting to your Department chairman the volunteer hours, dollars donated by VFW, Ladies Auxiliary, Cooties, Junior Girls and Men's Auxiliary members and other information requested.

Through the contacts you've developed in your community, cooperate with other civic or fraternal groups. They may already be involved in community service programs you would like to undertake, or they may be eager to help with projects that you've planned. Also identify resources at your Post, talk with members and find out what special skills or hobbies they may have.

VFW Scholarships

At the turn of the 20th century, the founders of the Veterans of Foreign Wars created an organization that would honor and serve veterans and perpetuate the values and ideals for which those veterans had served. Although men of vision, it is doubtful they could imagine the millions of Americans impacted today by the VFW's youth, scholarship and recognition programs. Every year, tens of thousands of students nationwide participate in the Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition and the Patriot's Pen Essay Contest, garnering more than \$3.2 million in scholarships, awards, and incentives.

Patriot's Pen Essay Contest

Patriot's Pen gives 6th, 7th and 8th grade students the opportunity to express their opinion on a patriotic theme and improve their writing skills, while they compete for awards and prizes. Cumulatively, the awards provided from all levels of the competition are around \$1.2 million each year. Each first place Department (state) winner competes for \$46,000 in award money at the national level with the first place winner receiving \$5,000 and a trip to Washington, DC in March.

Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) started the Voice of Democracy Scholarship

Competition in 1946. The Veterans of Foreign Wars became a national sponsor in the late 1950s and assumed sole responsibility for the program in 1961. Many notables have participated in the Voice of Democracy including journalist Charles Kuralt, Miss America Anita Bryant and former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft. The Voice of Democracy competition provides high school freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors the opportunity to write and record an audio essay on a patriotic theme, competing for more than \$2 million in college scholarships and incentives. Each first place Department (state) winner is brought to Washington, D.C. in March to enjoy our nation's capital and compete for \$152,000 in national college scholarships — first place receiving \$30,000.

Promote the Programs

Contact all schools and youth groups in your area in the spring and fall to make them aware of these opportunities. Contact the media in September to help you publicize the programs and again in November and December to announce your winners after the judging. Encourage teachers and other youth leaders to visit the VFW web site at <http://www.vfw.org/Community/Programs/> Tell them that both the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are endorsed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).



Your Commitment

To ensure a successful competition, Posts and Ladies Auxiliaries must commit knowledgeable chairmen, enthusiastic volunteers and resources to both competitions. Our goal is to grow the number of students every year. Approach schools in the spring because that is when most curriculum decisions are made for the coming fall. In late summer, revisit to ensure they have the necessary materials and are prepared to do the program. Don't hesitate to involve school administrators, PTA/PTO/PSO parents, teachers, counselors, radio and TV stations, newspapers, churches and other service, civic and community groups and organizations to encourage and facilitate student participation, help with the judging and generally promote the programs. We provide sample

news releases and PSAs on www.vfw.org on MY VFW (log-in and look at the Chairman Guide section.) Present VFW Scholarship Programs anywhere there are groups of students who might be interested. In addition to schools and home school programs; chairman should consider church youth groups, athletic teams, and Boy Scout and Girl Scout units – any place where young people can be reached.

Work Together

The VFW/Ladies Auxiliary Chairmen and volunteers should work together. It is the responsibility of the chairman to recruit and equip their volunteers with the basic contest details to conduct a successful scholarship program from start to finish.

Deadlines

The deadlines for both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are as follows:

1. **Midnight, November 1**, Entries to the Post*
2. **November 15**, Completion of Post judging**
3. **December 6**, Completion of District judging**
4. **January 7**, Completion of Department judging**
5. **January 15**, District participation reports to Department Chairmen**
6. **January 15**, Department winners to National*
7. **January 31**, Department reports to National*

*required deadlines **suggested deadlines

Order Materials Early

Order or download and print out student entry forms early in the year so you can provide a copy to anyone who needs one. These forms explain the programs: who can enter, how to enter, how schools can handle the program and how to connect with a Post to present their entry. The entry forms, plus a variety of other scholarship materials, can be downloaded online at <http://www.vfw.org/Community/Programs/> (click on Voice of Democracy or Patriot's Pen from this link.) Additional program items plus student awards and gifts are available through VFW Emblem & Supply (VFW Store) at (800) 821-2606, or online at www.vfwstore.org

Judging the Contest

Selection of five to nine (minimum of three is suggested) judges is the same for both programs and at each level of competition. Judges should be from outside your Posts/Auxiliaries and represent your community. Leaders from education, broadcasting, corporations, small business, and other fraternal and civic groups are ideal. Judges must not be connected in any way with the students in the competition. Set the date for your judging and invite the judges at least 90 days in advance. Remind them a week before the competition with a letter and two days before with a telephone call. Ask permission to publicize their selection (along with the program), to the media, thanking them publicly and follow up the judging with a written letter. Invite them to your awards event and publicly express your appreciation for their help.

REMEMBER: INTERPRETATION OF THE THEME IS UP TO THE STUDENT. ENTRIES SHOULD NOT BE DISQUALIFIED BECAUSE THEIR INTERPRETATION SEEMS INCORRECT OR INAPPROPRIATE.

Select a site that avoids distractions. The Program Chairman must be present for the judging. If possible, all essays/recordings should be reviewed several days before the judging. Also if possible, small errors like too many words, a bit too long, or a reference that inadvertently identifies them can be corrected by the student rather than a chairman eliminating them from the competition. Chairmen should never forget that our priority is to increase the number of students participating, rather than eliminate them.

If judging begins before 9 a.m., you may wish to provide coffee and juice. If judging continues through a mealtime, provide lunch, etc. For Patriot's Pen, provide each judge with their own copy of the essays, pencils and judging sheets. For Voice of Democracy, judges need only judging sheets and pencils. Voice of Democracy entries should be judged on the **recording only**, so the judges need not see a copy of the essay. All Patriot's Pen essays and Voice of Democracy recordings should be identified by number to ensure the anonymity of the competitor. Competitors should never present their essay/essay in person. Judges should be discouraged from discussing the essays or tapes during the judging process and should have no contact with the competitors. The judges' decisions are always FINAL.

Judging Criteria

Voice of Democracy contestants are judged on the following criteria:

- ✓ **Originality** (possible 30 pts.) Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.
- ✓ **Content** (possible 35 pts.) Ideas are expressed clearly and in an organized manner.
- ✓ **Delivery** (possible 35 pts.) Speaking voice is clear and credible.

Patriot's Pen contestants are judged on the following criteria:

- ✓ **Theme knowledge** (possible 30 pts.) Has the student researched and understood the theme?
- ✓ **Theme development** (possible 35 pts.) Does the essay answer relevant questions: who, what, where and why.
- ✓ **Clarity of ideas** (possible 35 pts.) Is the writer's interpretation of the theme presented clearly?

Local Competition Alternatives

Recently, teachers and school leaders have shown reluctance to participate in our scholarship competition if they devote precious class time to completing entry forms and (in the case of the Voice of Democracy) record essays. For this reason, we offer teachers/youth leaders the option to simply use Voice of Democracy or

Patriot's Pen as a writing exercise. The teacher/leader may submit all entries to the Post for judging or conduct a judging within the group/class and advance a winner for every fifteen (15) participants. Note: This decision should be determined by the Post Chairman; working closely with the teacher or group leader.

School/Youth Group to Post (both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen)

- 1-15 essays – One (1) entry to Post
 - 16-30 essays – Two (2) entries
 - 31-45 essays – Three (3) entries
- (NOTE: no limit)

Post Competition

Post entries are required to include the following:

Patriot's Pen: Typed essay in English of 300-400 words (no graphics) and a student entry form completed legibly. All words must be counted.

Voice of Democracy: Typed essay, a standard cassette tape or audio CD of the recorded essay (3-5 minutes, +/- 5 seconds), and a student entry form completed legibly. Please refer to the student Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen entry forms to review the complete rules and guidelines. For both programs, Posts must accept and judge all eligible entries received by midnight, November 1.

Post to District (for both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen)

- 1-15 essays – One (1) entry to District
 - 16-30 essays – Two (2) entries
 - 31-45 essays – Three (3) entries
- (NOTE: no limit)

District to Department

One (1) entry per District (**with student's head & shoulders photo added at this time for first place District winner.**) This applies to both Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen.

Judging CDs

For Voice of Democracy, the student entry form instructs the student as follows: "The preferred format for CD's is the audio CD format. When burning your CD, make sure that 'Create Audio CD' option (or similar) is selected so the program can properly convert your sound file and

burn it to CD. After it has finished, be sure to play back your audio CD on a system other than your computer, such as a standard radio or car CD player, to verify that the conversion/burning process was successful."

NOTE: If the entry has been recorded according to the criteria specified above; Posts, Districts and Departments should never reject an entry because they are unable to play the CD. Part of the chairman's responsibility is to review the entries to ensure appropriate equipment is available to properly judge the entry.

Handicapped Student Criteria

The Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen competitions are offered to the public primarily through our nation's school systems. In compliance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, we provide "reasonable accommodation" for someone with a documented permanent disability. Requests for accommodation must be submitted in writing with the student's entry materials. As an example, a hearing/speech-impaired student may select another student of the same age and gender to record their Voice of Democracy essay. The volunteer assisting the disabled student is not eligible for any scholarship compensation, awards or benefits from the program. All questions regarding accommodation of a disabled student should be directed to the Director of Programs, VFW National Headquarters, 406 West 34th St., Kansas City, Missouri 64111.

Reporting Guidelines

Post reporting is part of each competitor's entry form. Department Chairman will be mailed District and Department reporting forms in August, and they can be e-mailed from the Programs Dept by request in either Word or in a PDF. January 15 is the deadline for District reports. Deadline for Department reports to arrive at National is January 31st.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON VOICE OF DEMOCRACY OR PATRIOT'S PEN, CONTACT:

Kris Harmer
(816) 968-1117
kharter@vfw.org

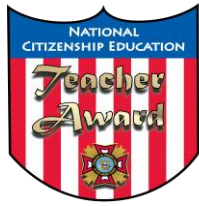
All information that is needed to conduct the programs are online now under "My VFW." Visit this website <http://www.vfw.org/Login.aspx> where you can access all of the VFW's Online Membership System (OMS) services available to our members and VFW leaders. After you log in (or create an account and log in), click on **CHAIRMAN GUIDES** under the **General Members Tools and Resources** heading. There you will find this "Scholarships Programs" manual and below that, you will find the following additional materials:

- 1.) "National Scholarship Brochure" (great to hand out to teachers when you speak to them)
- 2.) "How-To Guide for Promoting Youth Programs" (contains helpful information for chairmen)
- 3.) Voice of Democracy Scoresheet
- 4.) Patriot's Pen Scoresheet
- 5.) Sample Press Releases and PSAs for Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen

You can download and print the student entry forms for Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen by visiting the below links and clicking on "ACCESS COMPLETE RULES AND INFORMATION."

Voice of Democracy: <http://www.vfw.org/Community/Voice-of-Democracy/>

Patriot's Pen: <http://www.vfw.org/Community/Patriot-s-Pen/>



HONORING THOSE WHO TEACH

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award

The VFW launched the Smart/Maher National Citizenship Education Teacher Award in 1999 to recognize classroom teachers for promoting citizenship education. Three teachers from each level (grades K-5, 6-8 & 9-12) are selected as national winners. Each national award teacher winner receives the Past Commander-in-Chief John Smart Award and \$1,000. Their respective schools also receive a \$1,000 award. They also receive a paid trip to a VFW national conference to receive their award. Visit this link for more information and for a nomination form:
<http://www.vfw.org/Community/Teacher-of-the-Year/>

Deadlines

November 1 - Deadline for teacher nominations at the Post. Post judging should be completed by November 15th and winners sent to District. District judging should be completed by December 15th and winners forwarded to the Department. Department judging should be completed January 10th and winners submitted to VFW National Headquarters by January 15th.

SPECIAL NOTE: Anyone may nominate a teacher except for the teacher himself or herself (or the teacher's relative.) While a school official may nominate a teacher, permission from a school or district is not required.

Post chairmen must be sure to send the original nomination form, essay and official Post teacher entry form of the winner from each grade's category level — along with one-page resume, up to five pages of documentation and a good quality head and shoulders photograph from the winning teachers. Previous state and national VFW winners are not eligible.

Judging

Select competent and unbiased judges. A panel of at least three to five judges is recommended. The VFW chairman should be present at the judging to provide assistance but should not be one of the judges. Prior to the judging, the chairman should review all nomination forms to ensure they adhere to the rules. Make sure entry is not a self nomination. The nominator should keep to the 350 word limit and sign the nomination. Judges should grant points based on four criteria with the potential of 100 points as follows:

1-25 points - Does the teacher teach and/or model good citizenship and community involvement?

1-25 points- An innovative approach to teaching citizenship.

1-25 points - Development of resources to teach citizenship education.

1-25 points – Passion for teaching citizenship education.

NOTE; JUDGING SHEETS ARE AVAILABLE ON LATER PAGES.

Running the Program

Here are some important points to remember when conducting the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award Program.

- Know the program procedures and judging guidelines thoroughly.
- Develop a good working relationship with your Post's Ladies Auxiliary chairman.
- Contact schools early and make a point of explaining the importance of the program to the principal.
- Send a news release to your local media with the names of your winning teachers (see website for sample.)
- Recognize your participants — both winners and judges — with official VFW awards - see the official VFW Store catalog (or visit www.vfwstore.org for ideas.
- Send an accurate and detailed report of your competition along with your winning Post's entries to the District as soon as the competition is finished.

Your report should include the following:

- 1) Ladies Auxiliary participation
- 2) Number of schools
- 3) Total amount of money spent (including banquet costs, gifts and citations.)

Winning Entry Checklist

Here's what your Post needs to have to your District by November 15th.

- Winning Post teacher's entry form, original nomination form and essay by individual making the nomination. (Up to 350 words.)
- Teacher's one page resume (no more than two sides).
- Up to five pages (both sides) of documentation such as news articles or supervisor's recommendations.
- Good quality head and shoulders photo of the teacher.

Above requirements are the same for Districts to send to the Department by December 15th.

If you have any questions, please contact Tammy Beauchamp in VFW Programs, ph: (816) 756-3390 ext 287, E-Mail: tbeauchamp@vfw.org

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Advancement Form (Post Teacher Entry Form)

(Attach to original Post entry documentation for each teacher nominated)

Nominee's Full Name _____

Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Social Security Number _____ Grade level K-5 6-8 9-12

Name of School _____ School's Phone _____

Address _____

Post/Ladies Auxiliary Chairman Section

I certify that the teacher named above is the duly selected Post winner of the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award Program in his/her grade level category and is our Post's authorized entry into the District finals.

Signature of Post Commander/Chairman _____ VFW Post No. _____ Phone _____

Post Address _____

Signature of Ladies Auxiliary President/Chairman _____ Auxiliary No. _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Total number of teacher nominations for all categories _____ Total dollar amount spent by Post/Ladies Auxiliary for awards for all categories and other (citations, gifts, medals, banquet) \$ _____

District/Ladies Auxiliary Chairman Section

I certify that the teacher named above is the duly selected District winner of the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award in his/her grade level category and is our District's entry into the Department finals.

Signature of Dist. Commander/Chairman _____ Dist. No. _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Signature of Auxiliary Dist. President/Chairman _____ Dist. No. _____ Phone _____

Address _____

List all Posts participating in program _____

Total dollar amount spent by Posts/Auxiliaries for awards for all categories and other (citations, gifts, medals, banquet) \$ _____

VFW Department Commander/Chairman Section

I certify that the teacher listed above is the duly selected winner of the 2013 – 2014 Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award in our Department in his/her grade level and is our official entry into the National judging. This winner will be/was notified that they are the first place state winner in their grade level on the following date: _____

Signature of Dept. Commander/Chairman _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Note: Be sure this form is entirely completed before sending to National Headquarters with your state winner's original nomination form, essay, one page resume, up to five pages of documentation and a good quality head and shoulders photograph. Remember this form is due back to VFW National Headquarters Programs Department by January 15th. Mail to: VFW PROGRAMS, VFW NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, 406 W. 34TH ST., KANSAS CITY, MO 64111.

TEACHER'S AWARD JUDGING SCORE SHEET

| TEACHER'S NAME | CITIZENSHIP (1-25 points) | INNOVATION (1-25 points) | RESOURCES (1-25 points) | PASSION (1-25 points) | TOTAL (possible 100 points) |
|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
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JUDGING CRITERIA

CITIZENSHIP – 1-25 Points – On a scale of 1-25, to what extent does the teacher encourage and/or model good citizenship and community involvement?

INNOVATION - 1-25 Points – On a scale of 1-25, how much innovation (new ideas, new tools, new resources, and new approaches) does this teacher utilize in the classroom? Does this teacher's effort reflect an ongoing desire to stimulate the students with new things?

RESOURCES – 1-25 Points – On a scale of 1-25, to what degree has this teacher demonstrated an ability to identify and utilize new and exceptional resources to fund, facilitate and provide materials for his or her classroom? Does this teacher tap into outside agencies, organizations and individuals to acquire materials and expertise in the classroom? As an example – bringing speakers, finding in-kind and monetary donations, utilize local opportunities like museums, field trips and local events.

PASSION – 1-25 Points – On a scale of 1-25, to what degree does this teacher appear to be passionate about the profession of teaching? Are they regularly seeking to upgrade their skills? Do they try and find ways to encourage their students? Do they take a personal interest in their student's individual success?

DATE _____ POST # _____ GRADE LEVEL K-5 6-8 9-12

JUDGE'S NAME (please print) _____

JUDGE'S SIGNATURE _____

NOTE: Judges should be carefully selected, preferably from individuals who have classroom experience and understand the challenges of teaching. They should never have any affiliation with the nominees or the schools where the nominees teach. While it may be necessary to use VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary members, it is preferred that judges come from outside our ranks to avoid the appearance of impropriety. During the judging, the chairman should facilitate and observe but refrain from offering his or her observations on the candidates. The judges are encouraged to discuss the candidates but must arrive at their own numerical evaluation using the grid above. Make sure all judges are kept aware of the progress of the teachers they have judged and are invited to any awards presentations.