

SEPTEMBER 2025

VFW Auxiliary

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUXILIARY MAGAZINE

PATRIOTIC ART
CONTEST WINNERS

4TH-ANNUAL
VFW DAY OF
SERVICE

2025-2026
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
LOIS CALLAHAN



QUESTIONS

EMAIL US AT INFO@VFWAUXILIARY.ORG.

The most direct digital line of communication for us to assist you is via our information email account.

This is monitored every weekday. Once we receive your question or concern in this inbox, we either answer or route it directly to the appropriate staff member who will respond to you.

DATES & DEADLINES

September

National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

- SEPTEMBER 1 Labor Day
- SEPTEMBER 11 Patriot Day
- SEPTEMBER 17 Constitution Day
- SEPTEMBER 19 National Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Recognition Day
- SEPTEMBER 28 Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day

October

- OCTOBER 13 Columbus Day
- OCTOBER 31 Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy Scholarship contest entries due to VFW Post

For more information on awards and deadlines, see the [2025-2026 National Program Book](#).

TABLE OF Contents

SEPTEMBER 2025 • VOLUME 90 • ISSUE 1

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



FOR UNCOMMON HEROES®



8

Features

8 VFW Day of Service

The VFW's 4th-annual Day of Service was a day to remember as Auxiliaries and Posts across the nation and around the world teamed up to give back to their communities.

9 2025-2026 National President

National President Lois Callhan will lead the Auxiliary with her theme of From Sea to Shining Sea, Extending Service to Our Veterans.

11 Young American Creative Patriotic Art & 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest Winners

Art was judged at National Headquarters; we displayed art from the top 19 National winners of the two-dimensional contest and the top three of the three-dimensional contest at Convention. See their patriotic expressions.

19 Illustrating America

This art contest showcases the talent of younger students grades K-8.



9



11

In Every Issue

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 3 Get Digital | 6 Reader's Voice |
| 4 President's Message | 7 Member Spotlight |
| 5 Editor's Letter | 20 HQ Memo |
| | 21 Our History |

About the Cover

Fourth-place National winner of the VFW Auxiliary's 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest: Sparks of Freedom by 9th grader Carson Jones of Indiana.



19

FOLLOW FOR A FOLLOW

VFW AUXILIARY NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS IS LOOKING TO EXPAND OUR CIRCLE ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM.

While hashtags are helpful, we are still sometimes missing the wonderful posts and stories members share of their Auxiliaries in Action.

We have therefore decided to start *FOLLOWING* VFW Auxiliaries and Department accounts on Facebook (in addition to on Instagram, which we have been doing). The best way to ensure we are able to find yours is to "follow for a follow." In other words, you follow us and we follow you back. We are excited to extend our reach, are developing new social media content and can't wait to start better connecting with you!

Please note: We are not following individual members at this time, just Auxiliaries and Departments, so if posting pictures from a personal account please continue to #hashtag and tag accordingly.



get
SOCIAL



Instagram
[@vfwauxiliaryhq](#)



LinkedIn
[VFW Auxiliary](#)



Facebook
[vfwauxiliary](#)



Pinterest
[vfwauxiliary](#)



YouTube
[VFW Auxiliary National Organization](#)





*I humbly thank
you for the honor
of serving as VFW
Auxiliary National
President for the
ensuing year.*

Dear members —

It was amazing to experience the energy and excitement of our VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Columbus, Ohio. Meeting new members and catching up with longtime friends is always so much fun, while celebrating accomplishments and sharing ideas for new projects is what keeps so many of us coming back year after year.

One of the most moving and emotional moments of my life also occurred at the National Convention, the installation of our 2025-2026 National Officers. I humbly thank you for the honor of serving as VFW Auxiliary National President for the ensuing year. To all newly installed Officers and appointees, I offer my congratulations and support.

We will all be taking virtual vacations to the shore this year, with my theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea, Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*. Our [2025-2026 National Program Book](#) features my Auxiliary mentors. The lighthouse for my precious mom Patsy Tamariz, the star for Linda Evans and the wording for Karlene Beams, who are all Arkansas Past Department Presidents. It is our mentors who teach us Auxiliary traditions and help keep our Auxiliaries strong. I hope you will also recognize and honor your mentors throughout the coming year.

As Auxiliary members, we spend so much time assisting and advocating for others that we may forget to thank and help one another. For this reason, our 2025-2026 special project will be to promote and increase the VFW Auxiliary Continuing Education scholarships. I hope you will get behind the idea of helping our members and their families train for a career and learn new skills. Your support of this project will improve their lives.

May we bring all the enthusiasm of the National Convention home and keep it going strong throughout the year as we serve America's heroes, their families and communities *From Sea to Shining Sea*.

With loyalty and respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lois Callahan". The script is fluid and cursive.

LOIS CALLAHAN
National President



*We look forward
to seeing what
you do to support
our mission in
2025-2026.*

Dear members —

Another great National Convention is in our rearview mirror and now we're immersed in the new Program Year. We at National Headquarters enjoyed meeting many of you in person, putting faces with names and learning more about you.

We tried something new this year with student artwork in the Convention exhibit hall. Rather than taking the actual art pieces, which increased the likelihood of art getting damaged in transit, we featured a digital art gallery where members could view top National entries from the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest, 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest and Illustrating America Contest on the big screen. We hope you enjoyed seeing their work.

Look for a story about the art beginning on page 11. Now is the time to start promoting these and other Auxiliary scholarships in your communities. Be sure to do so with the latest entry forms, info. sheets and brochures, available on our website and in MALTA Member Resources. It is important that you have the newest resources; scholarship and contest criteria can change year to year. We're trying something new here, too. We're working on an art checklist for MALTA Member Resources. We want to make it easy for members to check off all criteria starting at the Auxiliary level so by the time it gets to National, these talented students have every chance of competing for awards.

We elected Lois Callahan of Arkansas as VFW Auxiliary National President. Read about her path to our highest National office on page 9. We also recognize that for the very first time, both the Auxiliary and its parent organization will be led by a female National President and Commander-in-Chief.

We look forward to seeing what you do to support our mission in 2025-2026, including the ways you choose to contribute to National President Callahan's new special project that increases awareness of and grows awards for our very own Continuing Education Scholarship. Keep us in mind as you support this and send pictures and caption information our way at info@vfwauxiliary.org to be considered for Auxiliaries in Action social media posts.

This month is also National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. For us, every day is Veterans Day and we know even one death by suicide is too many. Focus on ways you can promote suicide prevention and share the 988 suicide crisis line emergency number.

In a few months, we will have a very busy February with TWO National events! Mid-Year Conference is February 9-13 aboard the Celebrity Reflection and our 13th Celebrating America's Freedom Event will be at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. on February 28.

AMANDA COOK
Editor-In-Chief

VOLUME 90 NUMBER 1

Editor-In-Chief
Amanda Cook

Contributing Writers
Nicole Panteleakos &
Kris Baker

VFW Auxiliary Magazine

is published six times per year – January, March, May, July, September and November – by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary, 406 West 34th St., 10th Floor, Kansas City, MO 64111.

Editorial Office

Address all communications for publication to The Editor, VFW Auxiliary Magazine, 406 W. 34th St., 10th Floor, Kansas City, MO 64111, (816) 561-8655, Fax (816) 931-4753. Unsolicited manuscripts and photographs must be accompanied by return postage and no responsibility is assumed for safe handling. Poetry submissions are not accepted. Or email info@vfwauxiliary.org.

Graphic Design

Braden Design
jaclynn@bradendesign.co

Change of Address

Members may change their own address or email address in MALTA. Or email info@vfwauxiliary.org.

Website

www.vfwauxiliary.org

READER'S VOICE



This is the space for comments regarding your *VFW Auxiliary Magazine*. Mail your submissions to National Headquarters or email them to info@vfwauxiliary.org, marked "Letter to the Editor." We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity. The opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor should not be interpreted as the opinion of the National Organization.

Natalie Copeland (Auxiliary 4816 in Porter, Texas) wrote, "Had 2 emails today with the magazine and both went to junk. Hope that me moving them to (my) inbox does not kick me off the list again" to which Susanne Crawford Wastlund (Auxiliary 7207 in Coushatta, Louisiana) added, "The same thing happened to me! Only in my case, it was just one email. What in the world gives?!!!"

FROM THE EDITORS TO NATALIE, SUSANNE AND ANY OTHER MEMBER FOR WHOM THIS HAS HAPPENED:

If *VFW Auxiliary Magazine* ended up in your junk or spam folder, it is likely because your email provider automatically categorizes mass emails as junk or spam as a form of protection. Each issue of *VFW Auxiliary Magazine* gets sent out to 100,000+ people, with more added each month as more members input their email addresses into MALTA, so if this is happening to you for the first time, it may be that the determining threshold for your email provider had only recently been met or that their way of detecting spam/junk has changed. If you usually receive *VFW Auxiliary Magazine* in your inbox but suddenly stop, please check your spam or junk folders first and, if given the opportunity by your provider, mark these as "not spam." This also works for the National E-Newsletter and other correspondence

from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters. You can also find the latest magazine on our website, www.vfwauxiliary.org/magazine, along with past issues dating back to January 2011. Thank you!

I just have to share with you that I go to MALTA often; I'm the District 5 Treasurer in Texas. I'm always looking for ways to improve my knowledge of my duties.

I'm like a kid in a toy store. When I saw the publication of *Building the VFW Auxiliary Foundation* I couldn't stop reading it. That publication is the best I have ever looked at. That book has more descriptions of Officers' duties than I have ever read.

I want to personally thank the person who made this available to members. I plan on telling everyone I can and encourage members to go on MALTA and download the info.

Again, thank you so much.

CAROL BRIETZKE
AUXILIARY 3413
San Marcos, Texas

MEMBER

SPOTLIGHT

Stephanie Wilkes

NEW OFFICERS KEEP AUXILIARY MOVING FORWARD

The new Program Year is here and for many Auxiliaries this is a time to celebrate renewal and rebirth within their groups. New Officers are being put in place, and new members are being welcomed into their ranks. One Auxiliary located in the Juanita neighborhood of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is embracing the themes of renewal and growth, despite facing significant losses.

STEPPING UP

Two years ago, Auxiliary 8685 lost two pillars of their organization. One of their longtime members passed away while another moved to a new location. These two members had served as Secretary and Treasurer respectively, and had for decades provided a solid foundation for this Auxiliary to grow. Whenever someone had a question about rules or regulations, these were the two they asked. For all of their incoming Officers, they were there to offer a guiding hand. Now they were gone.

Someone needed to step up. When it was time to elect a new President, there was no clear person to turn to. At the next meeting, at one point the room went quiet. Stephanie Wilkes had only been a member for six years at this point. She had dealt with anxiety about public speaking before; however, on this day she would not let that stop her. Wilkes spoke up, after some friendly encouragement.

"I have a good bit of anxiety speaking in front of large groups," Wilkes said. "I overcame that with the help of my Auxiliary family. They have been so supportive."

Wilkes, with the backing of her Auxiliary, ran for President. Along with her was a slate of new Officers, none of whom had held positions in the past. This was a fresh look for the Auxiliary. "I think it's important to bring in new ideas and stay fresh," Wilkes said. "It can be good to evolve as an organization and find new ways to do things."

There were some growing pains. Wilkes admits the first year was tough, as not only was she learning everything from scratch, but her new Secretary and Treasurer were

as well. However, this new set of Officers kept moving forward and now into her second year, Wilkes has come into her own and they are excelling with bake sales, veterans' bingo night, children's events and other assorted fundraisers.

"From the outside we are the same Auxiliary as we have been for decades," said member Cathy Eckard. "But internally we know the relapse and rebuilding that has gone on and the new strengths she has made. So, we thank our slate of new Officers for their investment and, in particular, our President Stephanie Wilkes, for leading the way."

Wilkes has brought additional young blood into Auxiliary work in the form of her two teenage sons, Brian and Alex.

"They have fun helping out at the bingo night," Wilkes said. "It's rewarding when you get to involve your family in events like that. And it's nice for them to be able to be around so many veterans."

Even while looking ahead, Wilkes still knows the value of experience.

"My grandmother Sophia is a longtime member, and I have relied on her a lot," Wilkes said. "I couldn't have done this without her."

Eckard is proud of her young President, which is why she nominated her for this spotlight.

"This seemed like a good way for us to honor, and thank her, as well as encourage other potential members of our Auxiliary or elsewhere, to take the chance. To get involved," Eckard said. "We thank Stephanie for being a role model to those around her." ★ KB



ABOVE: President Stephanie Wilkes (second from the left) and members of Auxiliary 8685 make ham sandwiches for a local fundraising event.

VFW DAY OF SERVICE

A DAY TO REMEMBER

The 4th-annual VFW Day of Service saw Auxiliary members from around the country and across the globe pitch in and do good work.

On May 3, more than 2,300 events were held to give back to local communities in the name of service. The VFW Day of Service saw VFW and Auxiliary members join forces on a wide range of projects such as Auxiliary 3219 in Phoebus, Virginia organizing a blood drive and Auxiliary 10950 in Outer Banks, North Carolina volunteering at a Senior Games Track & Field event.

Auxiliary 1781 in Fort Collins, Colorado used the day to present 17 Walmart gift cards to the Veterans Community Project (VCP) in Longmont, Colorado. VCP provides transitional homes to veterans who were once homeless. This group has worked with VCP for two years to combat veteran homelessness.

“Day of Service is the time for me to reflect on how blessed I am to live in this great country,” said Robynne Going, Auxiliary 1781 Life Member. “It’s (a) time where Post and Auxiliary join 100 percent together to help every veteran in our community.”

For Auxiliary 8924 in Anderson County, Texas, members took the day to come to a veterans' home and help clean up. A Post member/Army veteran had recently lost his wife and had suffered a heart attack that left him hospitalized for several months. During that time his house suffered some damage and needed attention. They focused on cleanup and repairs around his property, ensuring he had a safe and comfortable place to come home to.

“We were honored to give back to a fellow veteran in our community,” Auxiliary 8924 Treasurer Jamie Williams said. “We were so glad to see him back in his house and singing karaoke at our Post again.”

On a sunny day in Pearl City, Hawaii, 16 members of VFW Post and Auxiliary 10276 laid a U.S. Flag and mini lei next to the gravestones of 39 veterans at Sunset Memorial Cemetery. Of the veterans laid to rest there, the oldest is Robert Henderson who fought in the Spanish-American War.

“At present there is no one to take care of the cemetery except the VFW, neighborhood relatives of those buried there, other nonprofit organizations and at times the military,” said Auxiliary Secretary Miriam Fernandez.

Services like these might not be done without VFW and Auxiliary efforts, and it does not go unnoticed.

“VFW Auxiliary members were instrumental in ensuring the success of this year’s Day of Service,” said 2024-2025 VFW National Commander Al Lipphardt. “When the members of our great organizations work together, side-by-side in true partnership, what we’re able to accomplish is truly inspiring.”

VFW Day of Service is an outgrowth of the #StillServing campaign that launched in 2020 to recognize the ongoing dedication of veterans to serve their communities after their military service has ended. The fourth annual event continued throughout the month of May.

✶ KB



CLOCKWISE FROM CENTER: VFW Auxiliary 2678 teamed up with the Well-McComas VFW Post in Edgemere, Maryland and the local Boy Scout Troop to clean trash on the side of the road.

Red Bud Illinois VFW Post 6632 comrades and Auxiliary members participated in VFW Day of Service on Saturday, May 10, 2025. This year’s project was laying down weed barrier and mulch around more than 50 trees and shrubs at Lincoln Park in Red Bud, Illinois.

Post 12102 and Auxiliary held a food drive in Walterboro, South Carolina on May 3. Members and comrades manned a booth that was set up outside the local Ace Hardware store from 8 a.m. until the rain rolled in around 4 p.m. They collected a total of 200 pounds of food for the food bank and 125 pounds of pet food for the animal shelter along with \$575 in cash donations.

On Saturday, May 3, the Stoughton VFW Post 328 and their Auxiliary joined the Stoughton, Wisconsin Parks & Recreation Department and other community members to clean the headstones at Riverside Cemetery.

National President

LOIS CALLAHAN

*From Sea To Shining Sea,
Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*



Lois Callahan grew up in a military family and when her father, Ruben Tamariz, retired from the U.S.

Army, he and her mother, Patsy, settled in Arkansas, where she had moved a few years earlier.

At Callahan's suggestion, her parents got to know their local VFW Post and Auxiliary to meet new friends and become more involved in the community.

"They quickly became active members; it suddenly became difficult to find time with them," Callahan said. "Growing up, I saw the VFW as a place for my parents, aunts and uncles to socialize. I didn't understand then that they were supporting the work of the VFW and its Auxiliary and I certainly did not have any idea of the scope and effect of the Programs we support."

She joined the Auxiliary in 1990 on the eligibility of her father, who served in Korea and Vietnam. Her husband Terry is also a Vietnam veteran. Callahan has served the organization at many levels; her roles have included Auxiliary, District and Department President, National Youth Activities Ambassador and National Legislative Ambassador.

She recalled her first Chairmanship, at the local level, for Junior Girls, and how gratifying it was to work with the

youth, taking them on visits to see veterans in nursing homes, watching them lead the Pledge of Allegiance at functions, marching together in parades and including these little helpers at "Buddy"® Poppy distributions.

(While Junior Girls was always well-intentioned and many members have very fond memories around it, the Program was phased out because it became



ABOVE: Callahan attends a Statue of Liberty birthday with Karlene Beams, Past National Secretary-Treasurer Connie Atkinson and her mother, Patsy Tamariz. **PAGE 10:** Callahan joins a Poppy distribution at Auxiliary 2278 in Hot Springs, Arkansas 10 years ago. At the time she was National Legislative Ambassador and she handed out VFW Action Corps Weekly sign-up information.



evident that the Auxiliary, not being licensed or specialized in child care, should not take on this role of being responsible for children, which could invite liability.)

Other happy Auxiliary memories for Callahan

include delivering food baskets at Thanksgiving and collecting and donating coats and toys to veteran families at Christmas. Her Auxiliary also hosted a steady stream of speakers from their community – from first responders to martial arts instructors offering self-defense classes.

“The Programs we support and the work we do as Auxiliary members reaches far beyond our mission of assisting active-duty military and veterans,” she said. “We truly change the lives of their family members and improve their communities as well.”

Callahan speaks from personal experience. It was with her Auxiliary’s support and encouragement that she was set up for success when she returned to college in her late 20s to complete her degree, which led to a 26-year career as a pediatric occupational therapist. While she has retired from that role, in her new position as VFW Auxiliary National President, she hopes to offer even more opportunities to students wishing to further their education by way of her special project – promoting and growing award amounts for the Auxiliary’s Continuing Education Scholarship.

This year is also history in the making. For the first time, women will lead both organizations: the Auxiliary and the VFW.

Callahan’s counterpart this Program Year, VFW Commander-in-Chief and U.S. Army veteran Carol Whitmore, said, “The VFW and Auxiliary share one common purpose, and that’s to take care of veterans. Combining our strengths, we will achieve something truly remarkable. And I am extremely proud and grateful to be working with Lois!”

During her year in our organization’s highest National Office, Callahan said she looks forward to meeting more and more members.

“What we do makes a profound difference in the lives of the people we touch. Through our work, veterans are comforted, active-duty service members know they are being thought of, legislators are held accountable, and many family members are held up, encouraged, educated and assisted. What we do matters.”

★ AC



RIGHT: Callahan and VFW Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore.

2024-2025 YOUNG AMERICAN *creative* PATRIOTIC ART WINNERS



FIRST PLACE

\$15,000 National Scholarship

Department of New York

Patriotic Paws

Artist: **JOLIE MONDOUX**

12th Grade

Sponsored by

VFW Auxiliary 9249



SECOND PLACE

\$7,500 National Scholarship

Department of Missouri

Remorseful Soldier

Artist: **MALLORY ROTTLER**

12th Grade

Sponsored by

VFW Auxiliary 2210



3



THIRD PLACE

\$3,500 National Scholarship

Department of Minnesota

Leaving a Legacy

Artist: **LEVI COYOUR**

12th Grade

Sponsored by

VFW Auxiliary 210

FOURTH PLACE

\$1,500

Sandy Germany Department
of Alabama Scholarship

Department of North Carolina

The Weight of Duty

Artist: **CATHERINE PARK**

10th Grade

Sponsored by

VFW Auxiliary 7383



4



FIFTH PLACE

\$1,500

Evelyn McCune Department
of Kansas Scholarship

Department of South Carolina

A Soldier's Last Promise

Artist: **OLIVIA COLE**

10th Grade

Sponsored by
VFW Auxiliary 10980

6

SIXTH PLACE

\$1,000

M. Blanche Child Department of
Kansas Auxiliary 1650 Scholarship

Department of Idaho

When I Grow Up...

Artist: **HAZEL BLACK**

12th Grade

Sponsored by
VFW Auxiliary 9036



7

SEVENTH PLACE

\$1,000

Jean Hamil Department of
Florida Scholarship

Department of Florida

March of Patriotism

Artist: **CHRISTOPHER
EPPERSON**

12th Grade

Sponsored by
VFW Auxiliary 7721



EIGHTH PLACE

\$500

Department of Florida VFW
Auxiliary Scholarship

Department of Michigan

The Importance of Sacrifice

Artist: **KATELYN MORTON**

12th Grade

Sponsored by
VFW Auxiliary 9885

8

NINTH PLACE

\$500

Betty Morris

Department of Maryland Scholarship

Department of
West Virginia

96th Negro Infantry

Artist: **KHALIA REID**

11th Grade

Sponsored by
VFW Auxiliary 3466



109



TENTH PLACE

\$500

Juanita Crowe-Durbino

Department of Tennessee
Scholarship

Department of New Mexico

*The Pain from Those Who
Fought for Us*

Artist: **JAZMIN LOPEZ**

12th Grade

Sponsored by
VFW Auxiliary 4384

ELEVENTH PLACE

\$500

Lorraine Frier Department
of North Dakota Scholarship

Department of New Jersey

*A Soldier's Goodbye,
a Mother's Prayer*

Artist: **AVNI DESHPANDE**

11th Grade

Sponsored by
VFW Auxiliary 2290



11

TWELFTH PLACE

\$500

Department of Wisconsin VFW
Auxiliary Scholarship

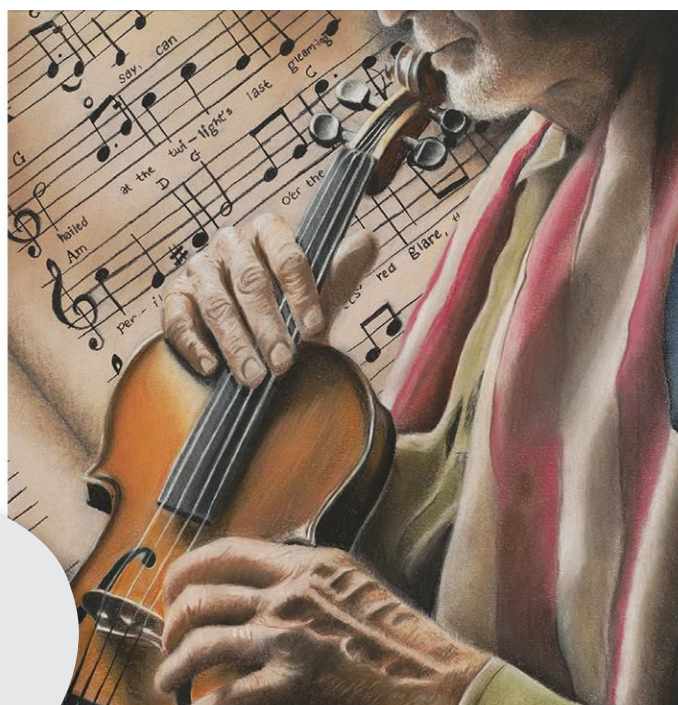
Department of Ohio

Fiddler of Freedom

Artist: **LYDIA FUCHS**

11th Grade

Sponsored by
VFW Auxiliary 2792



12

Find all 19 of the National Young American
Creative Art winners' pieces in the gallery
on the National website [here](#).

3-DIMENSIONAL PATRIOTIC ART WINNERS



FIRST PLACE

\$2,500 Jane Reape Department of
New York Scholarship

Department of Texas

Essence of American Patriotism

Artist: **JOHN MOORE**

11th Grade

Sponsored by
VFW Auxiliary 6209



SECOND PLACE

\$1,500 National Scholarship

Department of Oregon

We Remember

Artist: **CAELEB SUCHANEK**

11th Grade

Sponsored by
VFW Auxiliary 584



THIRD PLACE

\$1,000 National Scholarship

Department of Nevada

Resilient Flame

Artist: **CAMILLA DRENNEN**

12th Grade

Sponsored by

VFW Auxiliary 10047



**ANNUAL LIFE MEMBER MEETING, OCTOBER 24, 2025
VFW NATIONAL HOME
EATON RAPIDS, MICHIGAN**

The VFW National Home's Annual Meeting of the Corporation will be held in Eaton Rapids, Michigan at 9 a.m. (EDT), on October 24, 2025 in accordance with the VFW National Home Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, Bylaw Article IV, Section 1.

PURPOSE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

The purpose of the Annual Meeting is to certify the election of two trustees elected by the membership. Elections will take place for open positions in National Home District 1 and National Home District 2 for six-year terms, both ending October 2031.

ELECTION BALLOTS

District 1 includes Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire & Rhode Island
District 2 includes New York, Vermont, Connecticut & Europe

For more information, contact: Lynn Bloomer, Chief of Staff
3573 South Waverly Rd. Eaton Rapids, MI 48827
(517) 663-7023 or lbloomer@vfnationalhome.org

ILLUSTRATING AMERICA ART CONTEST

2024-2025 NATIONAL WINNERS

GRADES K-2



FIRST PLACE

GABRIEL M.

2nd Grade

Department of Florida

Sponsored by:

VFW Auxiliary 1590



SECOND PLACE

MAXWELL I.

Kindergarten

Department of Connecticut

Sponsored by:

VFW Auxiliary 1672



THIRD PLACE

SCARLETT K.

Kindergarten

Department of Illinois

Sponsored by:

VFW Auxiliary 9773

GRADES 3-5



FIRST PLACE

ITALIA D.

4th Grade

Department of South Dakota

Sponsored by:

VFW Auxiliary 4690



SECOND PLACE

ETHAN H.

5th Grade

Department of Washington

Sponsored by:

VFW Auxiliary 9430



THIRD PLACE

CAROLINE S.

5th Grade

Department of Alabama

Sponsored by:

VFW Auxiliary 3128

GRADES 6-8



FIRST PLACE

MACI W.

8th Grade

Department of Georgia

Sponsored by: VFW Auxiliary 665



SECOND PLACE

OPHELIA C.

7th Grade

Department of Alabama

Sponsored by: VFW Auxiliary 6073



THIRD PLACE

CLAIRE B.

8th Grade

Department of Minnesota

Sponsored by: VFW Auxiliary 9647

Thank you TO OUR JUDGES

We'd like to extend a huge thank you to artists who generously donated their time and expertise to help us recognize so many talented students this year! Our judges for Young American Creative Patriotic Art, 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art and Illustrating America contests include:

LYNN W. ROLF III AND MARY SPENCER,
our partners from the VFW.

BOB AND LAURA SWEARENGIN

own the Hilliard Gallery in Kansas City, "An elegantly urban and ever-changing gallery." The Hilliard Gallery has been voted the best gallery in Kansas City, voted Best Gallery in the State of Missouri as well as one of the top 25 galleries in the United States by The American Art Awards, and is recently winner of Best Gallery in K.C. by the Visit KC Visitors' Choice Awards. The gallery also helps with maintenance of artwork with preservation custom framing. Learn more about their gallery [here](#).

TO LEARN MORE

about VFW Auxiliary scholarships and contests and to find our new Patriotic Art brochure, visit our National website or see Scholarships and Youth Activities in MALTA Member Resources.

In 2025, HQ received more art entries than ever, including a sponsored entry from Guam that placed in the top 19 for Young American Creative Patriotic Art. Keep up the great work, and keep promoting this contest in your communities!

But also, do remember to judge and submit entries according to the rules (see the contest info. sheets) and check to make sure entries meet all the criteria and everything that should be submitted with the art gets to HQ so students from your Department are included in National judging.

Our HISTORY

111 YEARS OF UNWAVERING SUPPORT

From Spanish-American war wives to the welcoming of male members, VFW Auxiliary's mission has remained the same.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF ELIGIBILITY

It was on September 14, 1914 that the first official encampment of the Ladies' Auxiliary to the Veterans of

Foreign Wars kicked off. The VFW had just held their first encampment since the amalgamation of the predecessor organizations under one name and direction, and they requested that would-be Auxiliary members similarly gather and begin the process of official formation. A photograph taken that day features more than 50 women, including temporary Secretary Margaret Armstrong (who would go on to be unanimously elected our first National President).

The early Auxiliary members were primarily the wives of those who served during the Spanish-American War (1898), though VFW membership dates back to the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) so it's possible Auxiliary eligibility did, too. Members' duties ranged from caring for the sick and disabled veterans to fundraising for soldiers' children to planning celebratory return parades and parties for those fortunate to make it home and, of course, remembering those who did not. Though they were forming at the same time the VFW was finding its footing, their efforts were largely separate. As noted by Betty Mellicker, in *50 Years of Service*, "It was a time when women withdrew after dinner to discuss feminine concerns while men lingered at the table for brandy and cigars; consequently, the women never intruded into the men's

business and the men hadn't the dimmest notion of what the women were up to."

They ended the September 1914 encampment with a newly elected slate of Officers, a treasury of \$6.75 (equal to about \$200 today) and a bright future.

NEW WAR BRINGS NEW MEMBERS

From 1917-1918 much of the work of the Ladies Auxiliary was directly war-related, as they turned their homes into makeshift factories in which they gathered to roll bandages, make surgical dressings and sew lap blankets. They gave their time and blood to the Red Cross and promoted "Wheatless Mondays" and "Meatless Tuesdays." But it was not until 1918 when eligibility expanded to the wives, widows, mothers, grandmothers, sisters and daughters of those who were among the 2.8 million Americans to serve overseas in the Great War. This new, larger Auxiliary brought a few growing pains, but far more successes, including the formation of Departments, County Councils and the Daughters of the VFW units. In 1928, Bessie Hankin became the first National President to have joined under World War I eligibility; she would serve through 1930.

WOMEN VETERANS WELCOMED

National President Alice Donahue Chadwick was in Denver, Colorado to celebrate Founder's Day when the bombing of Pearl Harbor was announced. The scheduled parade went on, but as VFW Past Commander-in-Chief Gus Hartung led the procession, "hundreds of spectators joined the marchers in an expression of unity, determination and comradeship with the veterans" (*50 Years of Service*). In Hawaii, Auxiliary members

were already hard at work on an unexpected front line. War was declared and Auxiliaries members leapt into action. “Keep ‘em Smiling” was the VFW Auxiliary’s mantra, as they kicked off a publicity campaign to encourage sending cheerful messages of gratitude and encouragement to soldiers overseas. Through 1945, not only would they serve in volunteer roles, sell war bonds, fill factory job vacancies and keep the home fires burning, 350,000 women joined the American armed forces themselves. Upon their return stateside, it was determined by the VFW through the passing of an amendment that these women veterans would be eligible to join the Ladies Auxiliary under their own service, but not the VFW. (Prior to 1944, women could join the VFW under their own foreign service.)

In the final year of the war, Auxiliary membership surged, with 68,487 new members added as of August 1, 1945. Many of these, and many to come, were women veterans.

This included Gertrude Elaine (Snody) Lorenzen of Arizona Auxiliary 1433. We were fortunate to be able to interview her with help from her daughter, Lorna Lindert, in 2022. Lorezen, who has since passed away, told us she had joined the VFW Auxiliary under her husband’s service in the 1960s but became VFW eligible herself over a decade before when she served in Okinawa, Japan.

DUAL MEMBERS DO DOUBLE-DUTY

In 1978, the VFW changed their membership requirements by welcoming back women. Lorenzen joined, as did countless others; those who were also in the VFW Auxiliary were called “dual members.” As a dual member, Lorenzen served as VFW Post Adjutant and VFW Auxiliary Secretary, among other roles. She was not the only dual member to wear many hats. Sherry Wozniak of Connecticut Auxiliary 5446 joined the Auxiliary in 1979 under the eligibility of her father. Thirty-three years later, she would return from Army National Guard deployment to Iraq and join the VFW; she has now served in multiple positions in both organizations. And in 2022, Carla Martinez, a Navy veteran, was the first dual member to serve as National President. As of 2015, VFW-eligible veterans are no longer eligible for the VFW Auxiliary.

A NEW MILESTONE

For 100 years, we were the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, but that changed with one vote during the 2015 National Convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At that time, the Auxiliary remained women-only. Many felt there were plusses to having a strong women’s organization, but

being exclusionary meant denying ourselves the potential for many dedicated and deserving members. The husbands, sons, fathers, brothers, grandsons and grandfathers of VFW-eligible veterans, men and women alike, were already volunteering at Post homes and Auxiliary activities in honor of their loved one’s service or ultimate sacrifice, but they were not able to officially join. This didn’t seem fair. With men and women serving side-by-side in combat roles, why couldn’t men and women serve side-by-side in the VFW Auxiliary?

“I was young when my father served in Vietnam,” said VFW Auxiliary National President Lois Callahan. “I joined the Auxiliary in honor of (him)... and often wondered why my brothers, who (also) endured the anxiety and hardship, were any less qualified to join in honoring and serving than I was.”

So, a resolution was presented to expand eligibility to include these men and change the name of the organization from the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, better known as the Ladies Auxiliary, to simply the VFW Auxiliary.

When the resolution passed, Callahan and her mother already had her brothers’ applications filled out.

THE AUXILIARY TODAY

This year, we celebrate our 10th anniversary as a coed organization, while the VFW is being led by their first-ever female Commander-in-Chief, Carol Whitmore. Male Auxiliary members have served in many roles on all levels, with six men currently leading their states as Department Presidents.

“Male members bring different, new and interesting ideas and perspectives,” said Callahan. “We are more cohesive. It’s no longer ‘us’ and ‘them,’ (it’s) ‘we.’”

Our membership numbers and members’ faces change through the decades, but our mission remains the same: to provide Unwavering Support for Uncommon Heroes.

Happy 111th, VFW Auxiliary! ★ NP



RIGHT: Ron Boone, left, is 2025-2026 Department of Colorado Historian and a Past Department President, while Past Department of Colorado President Phil Reinbold, right, is the 2025-2026 National Scholarships Ambassador.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Theresa Erickson, featured in a 1922 issue of *VFW* magazine, nursed American troops during three conflicts: The Philippines (1898-1901), Mexican Border (1916) and France (1917-1918). She was a member of VFW Post 7 in Minnesota.

CLICK TO SHOP ONLINE!



VFWSTORE.ORG

NEW



Ladies'

NEW! HEATHER GRAY JACKETS

- VFW Auxiliary embroidered on left chest
 - 100% polyester sweater fleece
 - Chin guard
 - Full-length interior storm flap
 - Front reverse coil zippered pockets with binding trim
 - **Ladies' runs small**
 - **No additional embroidery available**
 - Imported; decorated in the USA
- 7274 Ladies' S-4XL **\$64.00**
(runs small)
7925 Men's S-4XL **\$64.00**
(not shown)

NEW



NEW! FLEECE HOODIE

- VFW Auxiliary lasered on front chest
 - 100% polyester polar fleece
 - Unisex sizing
 - Super soft feel
 - Unlined hood
 - Matching drawcord
 - Pouch pocket
 - Imported; decorated in the USA
- 7674 S-5XL **\$47.00**

NEW



NEW! SHAWL 70/30 polyester/viscose. Fringed ends with VFW Auxiliary on one end. 26 x 77". Imported. 1078 **\$24.50**

NEW



NEW! NAVY USA CAP Embroidered USA on front. Six-panel, structured, low profile, 100% cotton. Printed stars and stripes. Adjustable hook-and-loop back closure. Imported. 7121 **\$16.95**

NEW



NEW! STAR NECKLACE Soft enamel in silver plating. Crystal glass stones in red, white and blue. 17" chain with lobster clasp. 1½" charm. 1012 **\$8.00**

NEW



NEW! PARTNERS IN SUCCESS PIN Bronze plating with enamel fill. Double clutch back. 1¼". 1763 **\$5.00**

NEW



NEW! BLACK RHINESTONE USA HEART CAP Medium profile, six-panel structured cap. 100% cotton twill. Fabric strap with hook-and-loop closure. Red, white and blue brilliant rhinestones in a heart shape. Imported, decorated in the USA. 7255 **\$20.00**

Prices valid through 8/31/2026

Plus Shipping & Handling

1.833.839.8387

VFWSTORE.ORG