

Dept of Wisconsin -- National Scholarships – 2024-25

Hello everyone! Thank you, President Cheryl for asking me to chair the National Scholarships program this year.



What is the National Scholarships program? The program features 5 scholarships that encourage and promote patriotism. They help students attain an education and they increase the public's recognition of the VFW and Auxiliary while we support our communities, students and our own Auxiliary members with the soaring cost of higher education and technical schools.

First up, our essay contests.... called **The Patriots Pen** and **Voice of Democracy**. These are VFW scholarship programs that we, as the VFW Auxiliary, our important helpers with. I encourage every Auxiliary to partner with their Post to help get the word out about each scholarship contest. Ways you can help may include helping score the essays, helping plan the recognition of the winners, or helping to fund the awards. But the key is to work together.

The **Patriots Pen** essay contest is for students in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. This year the theme is: **“My Voice in America’s Democracy?”** This is a written essay between 300-400 words that must be handed in to a VFW Post by midnight on October 31st.

The **Voice of Democracy** contest is for students in 9th grade thru 12th grade. This essay contest is a written essay that is also recorded as the student author reads it. This year the theme is, **“Is America today, our forefather’s Vision?”** The recording must be between 3 and 5 minutes long. Both of these essay contests are open to students in public, private, parochial or home schools. They do NOT have to be relatives of VFW members. Links to both applications can be found at: <https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/youth-scholarships>

Next up... the **Continuing Education Scholarship**. This scholarship is open to any Auxiliary member (who's has been a member for at least 1 year), their spouse, or son or daughter. Entrants must be at least 21-years old. This scholarship requires an essay of 300 words or less and is due into National Headquarters by February 15th. An award of \$1,250 will be awarded to one applicant in each of the 4 national conferences. The application and essay can be mailed or e-mailed to: info@vfwauxiliary.org. (link to application: <https://vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships/continuing-education/>)

And last, but not least, are the Young American Creative Patriotic Art contests. We have a 2-dimensional art contest as well as a 3-dimensional contest. Students in 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade are eligible to enter. All artwork must be handed into a VFW Post by March 31st. After your Auxiliary judges your entries, the first place entry needs to be shipped to me by April 15th, 2025. I will remind everyone of the deadlines in the general orders as they get closer.

It's very important that scholarship winners for all these different programs receive recognition. The entrants have chances to win awards at the Dept. and National level... and they should have recognition and awards at the Post/Auxiliary level as well.

Here are some ways you could recognize your student winners:

- * you could present a certificate or a gift
- * you could ask the winner to give a speech or say the Pledge of Allegiance at an event
- * you could host an awards ceremony
- * you could present the awards at a school assembly
- * you could contact a local radio station or newspaper so you can feature them in the news
- * you can use the sample press releases available in MALTA under Member Resources
- * you can also recognize the parents and teachers as well!

I challenge every Auxiliary to make recognition a priority this year! Try adding one of these ideas to your current procedure. This will help increase interest and future participation.

Even more important, is the very first step ... Getting the word out about these scholarships. It's hard to have a scholarship program if no one enters! This is vital to the success of each scholarship program. It's more than just taking the applications to your local schools. Sometimes teachers don't have time to do more than their own curriculum, so they don't get a chance to tell students about our contests. Think about other places and groups that you could reach out to.

I challenge each Auxiliary to reach out to at least one group that they've never tried reaching out to before. Have you ever tried reaching out to a scouting group? Or a financial aid office? Or a youth sports team? Or parent-teacher associations? Or home-school associations? Or faith-based youth groups? Or other schools other than just the public schools in your area? Reaching out to a variety of groups will help you get more entrants for sure.

Like I said, I will provide more information about these scholarships as the deadlines approach. Complete contest information can be found online on the VFW and Auxiliary websites. Feel free to check it out whenever you have time. You can also see this past year's winning entries.

Let's work together this year to get some Wisconsin winners into the spotlight! Let's go Wisconsin!! Who's in? 😊

Thank you!

Deanna "Dee Dee" Carothers

2024-25 National Scholarships Chairperson

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