



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 participate in the Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition and the Patriot's Pen Essay Contest, garnering more than \$3.2 million in scholarships 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 approaches \$1.2 million each year. Department (state) winners compete for \$92,000 in U.S. Savings Bonds at the national level with the first place winner receiving a \$10,000 U.S. Savings Bond in Washington, D.C., in March each year.

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 a broadcast script on a patriotic theme, competing for more than \$2.1 million in college scholarships and incentives. Department (state) winners are brought to Washington, D.C., in March to enjoy our nation's capital and compete for \$149,000 in scholarships — first place receiving a \$30,000 scholarship.

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 www.vfw.org. They can download all materials from that site and even place their names in a database so they will automatically receive program materials each spring. Tell them that both the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are endorsed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).



2010-2011 APPROVAL COMES IN APRIL 2010.

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. 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 New Year so you can provide a copy to anyone who needs one. The student entry form explains 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 on-line at www.vfw.org or www.vfwdepartmentresources.org. Additional program items plus student awards and gifts are available through the VFW Emblem & Supply Department 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. 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 eliminate them from the competition. Chairmen should never forget that our priority is to increase the number of students 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/script in person. Judges should be discouraged from discussing the essays or tapes during the judging process and should have no contact with the competitors.

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 scripts. 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

- 1-15 essays – One (1) entry to Post
- 16-30 essays – Two (2) entries
- 31-45 essays – Three (3) entries

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 script, a standard cassette tape or CD of the recorded script (3-5 minutes), and a student entry form completed legibly.

For both programs, Posts must accept and judge all eligible entries received by midnight, November 1.

Post to District

- 1-15 essays – One (1) entry to District
- 16-30 essays – Two (2) entries
- 31-45 essays – Three (3) entries

District to Department

- One (1) entry per District (w/student photo)

Judging CD's

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."

Updated 3/15/10

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 script. 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 sent to the Director of Programs, VFW National Headquarters, 406 West 34th St., Kansas City, Missouri 64111 or e-mailed to svanbuskirk@vfw.org.

Reporting Guidelines:

Post reporting is part of each competitor's entry form. Department Chairman will be mailed District and Department reporting forms in July. January 15 is the deadline for District reports. Deadline for Department reports to arrive at National is January 31st.

FOR INFORMATION ON VFW SCHOLARSHIPS CONTACT:

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

***DOWNLOAD STUDENT ENTRY FORMS,
JUDGING SHEETS, TEACHER
BROCHURES, REPORTS & HOW-TO
BROCHURES AT:***

www.vfw.org
www.vfwdepartmentresources.org