

Voice of Democracy & Patriot's Pen

Mary Lombard, Chairman

In 1965 the Ladies Auxiliary VFW began co-sponsoring the Voice of Democracy Audio/Essay Contest with the Post with great success. This year's VOD theme is, "***Does America Still Have Heroes?***" scholarship. Nationally there is \$150,000 in scholarship awards that will be distributed to Department VOD winners; the winning entry at National level will receive a \$30,000. Voice of Democracy program is an oral essay competition for high school students 9-12 grade. Students will submit a recording of a 3-5 minute essay based on the theme.

This year's Patriot's Pen theme is "***When Is the Right Time to Honor Our Military Heroes?***". The first place National award is a \$10,000 U.S. savings bond. The Patriot's Pen Contest is open to students in grades 6-8. Students will submit a 300-400 word essay on the theme.

The Voice of Democracy Audio Essay and Patriot's Pen Contests are wonderful opportunities for our youth to express their views and to stretch their writing and speech skills. Let's make sure we reach out to as many as possible through our schools, local newspapers, cable television and the Internet. Order brochures from the VFW Store (<http://www.vfwstore.org> or 800-821-2606 Voice of Democracy 4420 and Patriot's Pen 4440) for contest rules and entry form. Also available from the store are 11"x17" posters (VOD 4431 and Patriot's Pen 4433) for each contest, suitable for posting everywhere!

Deadlines

Voice of Democracy Audio/Essay Competition and Patriot's Pen (deadlines are the same for both programs)

- November 1, 2009 Student deadline to Post/Auxiliary
- November 15, 2009 Auxiliary/Post finalists to District Judging
- December 6, 2009 District finalists to Department Judging
- January 15, 2010 Department winners to National

Familiarize yourself with both programs with information from the VFW "It's About Service" Guide which can be downloaded from www.vfwdepartmentresource.org. Complete contest rules, judging information and score sheets are included in the guide. Brochures can also be downloaded from this website.

Work with your Post to maximize efforts to publicize the program and reach the youth. Together you should get an early start with the schools contacting the PTO/PTA asking to speak at a meeting. Write a letter to the School Superintendent and your local Legislators for his/her support of the contests.

Recognize your Post Contest winners and participants at their school awards program or an informal class presentation in addition to the traditional recognition banquet/luncheon. There are all sorts of Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen award materials available from the VFW Store.

Use the 2009-2010 Program and Award Recognition report form for reporting. Recycle or use all your old report forms for scratch paper! Report any activity for the promotion of the contests. Even if your Post does not have an entry your Auxiliary's promotion needs to be reported. Include total dollars spent in promoting the contest including awards, recognition items and promotional costs. Most importantly, how did you publicize the contests within your community?

Department Awards for District Chairmen

- Citation to each District Chairman with at least 80% participation by Auxiliaries.
- Award to the District Chairman with the best overall promotion of the Voice of Democracy Audio/Essay and Patriot's Pen Competition.

Legacy Awards for Auxiliary Chairmen

A special recognition award honoring our Past Department Presidents awarded to the one Auxiliary Chairman in the state who best promotes the named award in the 2009/2010 year.

- Past Department President Patricia Whitley, Voice of Democracy Legacy Award
- Past Department President Gloria Palmer, Patriot's Pen Legacy Award

Department needs to be 80% reported in all programs to receive awards. There's no reason why we can't be 100%! I know that all our California Auxiliaries work hard to promote these contests and to recognize our youth. Report in order for your efforts to be recognized. The successes of our youth will get the word out to the community about our organization and our programs. Work with your Post, High School Counselors and Teachers, Parent/Teacher Associations, Youth Organizations and Community Leaders to promote these programs and to reach as many eligible youth as possible!

Mary Lombard

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