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Americanism

Americanism is a set of United States patriotic values aimed at creating a collective American identity and can be defined as “is an unflinching love of country; loyalty to its institutions and ideals; eagerness to defend it against all enemies; undivided allegiance to the Flag; and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity.”

Throughout this program, we show support for our nation’s veterans, service members and their families, and keep patriotism at the forefront of our lives. It begins by educating others about America’s traditions, displaying the flag, and recognizing others for doing so.

As members of the VFW Auxiliary, we have the knowledge to promote and celebrate our nation’s patriotic holidays and traditions. So, let us stay true to the red, white, and blue!

Teaching America’s Patriotic Traditions

It is our responsibility as members of the VFW Auxiliary to teach children about America’s patriotic traditions, and to honor and respect our Flag. Instruct them in the Pledge of Allegiance. Explain to them the “Star-Spangled Banner” and what the colors and numbers of stars and stripes on the U.S. flag represent. Be sure to recognize their hard work with a small patriotic item.

- *Flag Education
- *Promote Patriotism
- * POW/MIA Recognition
- * Smart/Maher National Citizenship Education Teacher Award
- * Coloring, Poster, and Essay Contest

COMMUNITY FLAG EDUCATION

What a great feeling to see our Flag flying. Our Flag is a living symbol of national pride and the freedoms we all hold dear. We need to reach out to our communities and teach others about our Flags history, and respect for our Flag, Flag etiquette and how to properly retire the flag. Ways to do this are:

Recognize businesses and individuals in your community that properly display the flag.

Provide a community Flag disposal receptacle to collect Flags that should no longer be displayed.

By doing these we can educate others about our most prominent symbol.

Invite the community to a Flag retirement ceremony so they can learn how to properly retire the Flag.

A large part of Americanism and demonstrating patriotic spirit is respecting and properly caring for the U.S. Flag. Flag etiquette covers everything from proper display of our Flag to acceptable conduct around this symbol of our nation.

When displaying the flag, DO the following:

- Display the U.S. flag from sunrise to sunset on buildings and stationary flagstuffs in the open. When a patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed 24-hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.
- When placed on a single staff or lanyard, place the U.S. Flag above all other flags.
- When flags are displayed in a row, the U.S. flag goes to the observer's left. Flags of other nations are flown at same height. State and local flags are traditionally flown lower.
- When used during a marching ceremony or parade with other flags, the U.S. Flag will be to the observer's left.
- On special days, the flag may be flown at half-staff. On Memorial Day it is flown at half-staff until noon and then raised.
- When flown at half-staff, should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. By "half-staff" is

meant lowering the flag to one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff.

- When the flag is displayed over the middle of the street, it should be suspended vertically with the union (blue field of stars) to the north in an east and west street or to the east in a north and south street.
- When placed on a podium the flag should be placed on the speaker's right or the staging area. Other flags should be placed to the left.
- When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall (or other flat surface), the union (blue field of stars) should be uppermost and to the flag's own right, that is, to the observer's left.
- When displayed in a window it should be displayed in the same way -- with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street.
- When the flag is displayed on a car, the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.
- When the flag is used to cover a casket, it should be so placed that the union is at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

When saluting the flag DO the following:

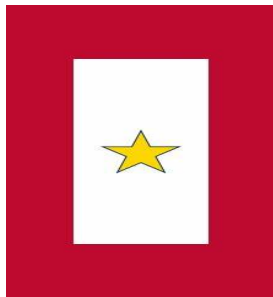
- All persons present in uniform (military, police, fire, etc.) should render the military salute. Members of the armed forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute.
- All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart.

When stowing or disposing of the flag, DO the following:

- Fold in the traditional triangle for stowage, never wadded up.
- The flag should be folded in its customary manner.
- It is important that the fire be large and of sufficient intensity to ensure complete burning of the flag.
- Place the flag on the fire.
- The individual(s) can come to attention, salute the flag, recite the Pledge of Allegiance and have a brief period of silent reflection.
- After the flag is completely consumed, the fire should then be safely extinguished, and the ashes buried.
- Please make sure you are conforming to local/state fire codes or ordinances.

Quick list of Flag Etiquette Don'ts:

- Don't dip the U.S. Flag for any person, flag, or vessel.
- Don't let the flag touch the ground.
- Don't fly flag upside down unless there is an emergency.
- Don't carry the flag flat or carry things in it.
- Don't use the flag as clothing.
- Don't store the flag where it can get dirty.
- Don't use it as a cover.
- Don't fasten it or tie it back. Always allow it to fall free.
- Don't draw on, or otherwise mark the flag.
- Don't use the flag for decoration. Use bunting with the blue on top, then white, then red.



Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day History

“On June 23, 1936, a joint congressional resolution designated the last Sunday in September as Gold Star Mother's Day and it is proclaimed annually by each president. In 2011, President Barack Obama amended the day to “Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day.”

The history of National Gold Star Mother's Day and their families begins with a young country thrown during a great war. Army Captain Robert L. Queissner, whose two sons were serving on the front-line during World War I, created what is now called the Service Flag. The flag was displayed with a blue star to represent a child serving in the military during times of war or hostilities. When a service member died, families stitched a gold star over the blue star. It is a tradition to honor a fallen service member with a Gold Star indicating a family member has been lost while serving during a period of conflict or war in which the United States is engaged. The Gold Star is placed over the Blue Star creating a blue border. The Gold Star represents valor and sacrifice to the cause of liberty and freedom. The Blue Boarder is a faithful reminder that the service member will always be remembered and honored.

The [American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.](#) was incorporated in 1929. An ocean often divided families from their deceased sons, as was the case of the founder of the American Gold

Star Mothers, Inc., Grace Darling Seibold. While waiting for confirmation of her son's death, she visited the VA hospital almost daily and made herself useful in the process. Afterward, she continued to visit the hospital and formed the organization that unites gold star mothers still today." (Source: <https://nationaldaycalendar.com/gold-star-mothers-day-last-sunday-in-september/>)

On this day we can express our gratitude and respect for our nation's Gold Star Mothers and Families. They are the mothers and immediate family members of fallen military service members. Please encourage **all** Americans to honor these Mothers and Families!

How to Honor and Recognize Them

One of the best ways I was taught to honor Gold Star Mothers and Families is if you see someone wearing a Gold Star Pin, or see a Gold Star Banner hanging in their window, ask the person who the star is for, and what is their Stars' name? Do not be afraid to speak to them about their Star; if you say their name, they are never forgotten. Pierre Claeysens said it best, "To be killed in war is not the worst that can happen. To be lost is not the worst. To be forgotten is the worst."

Another thing I was taught when honoring a Gold Star Mother and Family is to refrain from applauding. You must remember these moments are hard for mothers and families as they remember their loved one(s) who are no longer with us. We can honor Gold Star Mothers and Families through ceremonies, luncheons, and teas. We can honor them with a simple thank you, a thinking of you card, a citation, and a moment of silence for their loved one. We can honor them outdoors at a war, veteran, or military memorial site. Times are hard because of Covid, and social distancing and face masks are requirements in many areas, so please honor these mothers and families the best you can.

I challenge you find your local Gold Star Mother's and Families and recognize them. Let them know that we, as an organization, will never forget.

Patriotic Holidays are a great way to bring the communities attention to your Post and Auxiliary.

Show that your Auxiliary supports patriotism and our Veterans and their families. Use the holidays to promote your programs.

Patriotic holidays are an opportunity to involve the whole family and bring the communities together.

LOYALTY DAY – May 1

On May 1, 1933, 10,000 VFW members staged a rally at New York's Union Square to promote patriotism. Through a resolution adopted in May 1949, May 1 evolved into Loyalty Day.

MEMORIAL DAY- May 30 (Traditional)

Patriotism calls for all citizens to be reminded of the deaths of fellow countrymen during wartime. By honoring the nation's war dead, we preserve their memory and thus their service and sacrifice.

FLAG DAY – JUNE 14

This day celebrates the official symbol for the United States: our “Stars and Stripes” Flag Day was first recognized by congress on June 14, 1777.

INDEPENDENCE DAY- July 4

On this day in 1776, our forefathers formed a new nation by adopting the Declaration of Independence.

PATRIOT DAY- September 11

This day is to perpetuate the memory of those who perished in the attack on America that occurred on this date in 2001.

POW/MIA- September 17th (This is the Third Friday in September)

POW/MIA honors the commitments and sacrifices made by our nation’s prisoners of war and those who are still missing in action. Traditionally on this day it is one of 6 days specified by law which the Black POW/MIA flag shall be flown over federal facilities and cemeteries.

GOLD STAR MOTHER’S & FAMILY DAY- September 29th

On this day we honor the sacrifices the families have made by losing a loved one in the time of war.

VETERANS DAY- November 11

This is the opportunity to publicly commemorate the contributions of the living Veterans.

PEARL HARBOR DAY – December 7

This is in remembrance of the same date in 1941 that Japanese bombers stages a surprise attack on the U.S. military and naval forces in Hawaii.

NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY – March 29

National Vietnam War Veterans Day honors a generation of men and women who served and sacrificed during the longest conflict in U.S. history. This date marks the anniversary of when combat forces departed South Vietnam in 1973, even though some troops remained until their final departure in 1975.



POW/MIA RECOGNITION

Auxiliary members are passionate about bringing attention to former Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action by holding ceremonies to both educate their communities and honor special veterans. One way to honor these veterans and educate the community on this subject is by having a “Missing Man Table Ceremony”. This practice provides a visual demonstration of the significance of POW/MIA Recognition Day. You are encouraged to share this ceremony with youth groups partnering with the Auxiliary.

Find a sample of the ceremony wording and table setup at: vfwauxiliary.org/resources.

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award

The VFW launched the [Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award](#) in 1999 to recognize classroom teachers for promoting citizenship education. This annual contest recognizes the nation’s top classroom teachers who teach citizen education topics regularly and promote America’s history and traditions effectively. Teachers who are prime candidates for this award promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism.

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 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
- Recognize your participants (both winners and judges) with official VFW awards – see the official VFW Store catalog or visit vfwstore.org for ideas.

Do you know a teacher who deserves this award? Nominate them!

- Fill out the nomination form contained in [this brochure](#).
- In 350 words or less, describe why you feel your nominee should be selected.
- Describe the teacher's innovative teaching and resource development methods, as well as his or her dedication to education.
- Submit your completed nomination form and signed essay to your local VFW Post by October 31, 2017.

All Post-level nominees, if they win, should provide a one-page resume, up to five pages of documentation of their teaching experience (references, news articles, etc.) and a head-and-shoulder photo of themselves. These items will be forwarded on to the District with the Post Teacher Entry form, nomination form and essay.

What are the National awards?

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Awards include the items below:

- A national \$1,000 Past Commander-in-Chief John Smart award for each of the top K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 teachers for professional development expenses.
- \$1,000 award for each winning teacher's school.
- Plaques for both the winning teacher and school.
- An all-expenses-paid trip to attend the VFW National Convention.
- Top 10 high school teacher's invitation to attend a summer Graduate Seminar at Freedoms Foundation in Pennsylvania.

For more information, instructions for nominations, nomination forms and deadlines, visit the [Teacher of the Year page](#) on the VFW website.

The investment that a teacher makes in today's youth will be the dividends we will all reap from future leaders.

THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS ARE DEPARTMENT ONLY



COLORING, POSTER, AND ESSAY CONTEST

Coloring Contest: This contest is for preschool students ages 3,4, and 5 as well as those in kindergarten. These entries should also include the student's age. A copy of coloring page is included. All District winners should be received by department chairman by April 15,2022. Make your local and District deadlines early enough to have entries to Department on time.

Poster contest: This is for students in grades 1-3. Poster should be no larger than 14"x22" and white in color. The poster can be done in crayon, coloring pencil, marker or any other coloring agent. The theme is: "Honoring Old Glory and those that fought for her". Student's name, school age and grade, Auxiliary name and District number should be on the back. First place winners from District are due to Department chairman by April 15, 2022. Make your local deadline early enough to have entries to Department on time.

Essay Contest: This is for students in grades 4-5. The essay should be typed or legibly written in black ink. The essay will require a cover sheet listing the student's name and School, and grade. The Auxiliary name and District number should be on back page. The theme is: "Honoring old Glory and those that fought for her." First place winners from District are due to Department chairman by April 15, 2022. Make your local deadline early enough to have entries to Department on time.

Student Awards

1. An Award to the first-Place winner in the pre-school and Kindergarten Coloring Contest in each of the groups: ages 3,4,5 and Kindergarten.

2. An Award to the First-place winner in Poster Contest in Grades 1,2, and 3.
3. An Award to the first-place winner in the Essay Contest in Grades 4 and 5.

Reporting:

If you can please report online. If you do not there, is one included with this program. Please report as you do a project, do not wait until you have completed several then report them all at once.

Auxiliary Awards:

1. Award to the Auxiliary Chairman with the best promotion for the SMART/MAHER VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Program. A written report (including pictures, social media promotions, newspaper etc.) must be submitted to Department Americanism Chairman by March 31, 2022
2. An Award to the Auxiliary Chairman with the best POW/MIA Program. A written report (including pictures, social media promotions, newspaper etc.) must be submitted to Department Americanism Chairman by March 31, 2022
3. A Citation to each Auxiliary 100% reported in Americanism Program by December 31,2022

DISTRICT AWARDS:

1. An Award to the District chairman with the best overall promotion of the Americanism Program at a District Meeting. Reports should be sent to Department Chairman after each meeting no later than March 31, 2022.

National Awards for Auxiliaries

1. Most outstanding promotion of patriotic holiday in the community.
2. Citation to every Auxiliary that promotes patriotic holidays in their community.
Criteria and entry form available at vfwauxiliary.org/resources. Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Chairman by March 31,2022. Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries by National Headquarters.
3. Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences with the most outstanding promotion of patriotic holidays in the community.

The Department Americanism Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to National Americanism Ambassador by April 30,2022 for judging.

NATIONAL AWARDS FOR DEPARTMENTS AND DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN

1. Citation to each Department Americanism Chairman for participation in this Program.
2. \$25 VFW Store Gift Certificate to the one Department Americanism Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of Blue Star Mothers and Families.