

Americanism Ambassador/ Patriotic Instructor



FRANCESCA BILL
4882 Woodcrest Rd.
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
651-263-6721
frankiebill@msn.com

Americanism is a like-minded characteristic of an individual, group or culture set of United States patriotic values aimed at creating a collective American identity. The VFW Auxiliary's foundation is based on an ideology which is defined as an expression of the nation's rightful place in the world; a set of traditions, a political belief and a cultural style inspired with political meaning. Americanism is a Program designed for promoting patriotic unity and teaching Auxiliary traditions. We are a group of passionate members who share a bond for veterans, their families and community.

Patriotism is described as a sense of attachment to a homeland and alliance with other citizens who share the same sentiment. In other words, American national pride is a feeling of love and devotion for the whole of the United States. This connection is based on a foundation of various factors including ethnic, cultural, political or historical aspects.

Combine Auxiliary and Patriotism together and you have nearly 475,000 members who share a similar passion for the United States. We are a group of people who vigorously support our nation and more specifically, those who have served and continue to serve our country. Through patriotic unity, community connection, and the red, white and blue, we honor America's history and thrive in the land of the free by exercising patriotism and promoting Americanism in our daily actions.

Patriotic Unity

Patriotic unity is a term which indicates wholeness, harmony, togetherness or national pride. This should not be owned by one individual, but rather an entity, like an Auxiliary, to promote and demonstrate respect for America's patriotic traditions. All members have a responsibility to help educate their communities on America's patriotic traditions, including honoring the United States Flag.

Community Connection

For more than 100 years, we continue to respect and carry forward Auxiliary traditions. Today, we persevere by navigating new technology and using social media platforms to promote the Americanism Program. We are unveiling a first-ever hashtag to promote patriotism as a next-level tool to continuously connect with our communities. Whether you are capturing patriotic unity or Auxiliary traditions in action, tag the activity and/or event using the hashtag #AuxiliaryPatriotism. Record these moments by posting them to social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Are you celebrating a patriotic holiday, recognizing a Star family or honoring POW/MIA in your community? Show your patriotic pride by using the hashtag.

Here are some ideas when tagging #AuxiliaryPatriotism:

- Lead a United States Flag raising ceremony at a local business or sporting event.
- Participate in a community patriotic holiday parade. Ask Auxiliary members or youth groups to get involved and help hand out Flags or decorate a float, if applicable.
- Host a recognition experience of Auxiliary Programs (e.g., patriotic holiday ceremonies, Patriotic Art Contest participants, hospital volunteers, legislative activities sponsoring veterans, "Buddy"® Poppy drives, or veterans and military caregivers or mentors). Capture the art of Auxiliary traditions embedded into these events.

- Honor the POW/MIA with a balloon release or Flag-folding service.
- Conduct a Facebook Live or School of Instruction hosted by the Patriotic Instructor.
- Produce a video demonstrating Flag etiquette
- Invite Star families to special Auxiliary events, such as a Family Freedom Festival.
- Partner with parents and educators to raise awareness and help educate America's future leaders in the meaning of patriotism. Inspire those in the classroom and the community to further build on the legacy of the Auxiliary traditions and promote the Americanism Program.

Red, White and Blue

If we keep patriotism in the forefront, we demonstrate a pledge to our nation's veterans, service members and their families. By exercising patriotic unity through community events such as honoring patriotic holidays, recognizing those who display the United States Flag (individuals or businesses) and educating others about America's patriotic traditions, we extend the legacy of respect for the red, white and blue and of the VFW Auxiliary.



Americanism Program

**Flag Education • Promote #AuxiliaryPatriotism
POW/MIA Recognition • Star Family Recognition**

This definition of “Americanism” was originated by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, United Spanish War Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the National Commanders of the American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans of the World War at a conference held in Washington, D.C., in February 1927:

“Americanism 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.”

Patriotic Instructors

The Patriotic Instructor educates members about the proper salute to the U.S. Flag, as well as the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. He or she also takes the time to understand the VFW Auxiliary Ritual and the Federal Flag Code. He or she helps members to understand the traditions and ceremonies of the organization. The *Understanding Auxiliary Traditions* helpsheet and video are available on the website at vfwauxiliary.org/resources.

For detailed information on Auxiliary traditions, rituals and patriotic ceremonies, reference the *VFW Auxiliary Podium Edition: Bylaws and Ritual*. Patriotic items and educational materials are available for purchase through the VFW Store at 1-833-VFW-VETS or online at vfwstore.org.

Flag Education

A large part of showing 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.

For more information about Flag etiquette, the history of our Flag and to read the U.S. Flag Code, visit vfw.org/community/flag-etiquette.

Respect for the Flag - Engaging the Community

- **Flag Education in Schools** – Educating our youth about patriotism is an important step on the path to good citizenship. Encourage members of your Auxiliary to volunteer in schools and educate youth on the importance of respecting our Flag. Volunteers can visit individual classrooms or do a presentation at a school assembly. For more resources, visit vfwauxiliary.org/what-we-do/americanism.
- **Recognition of Outstanding Community Flag Display** – When a community member, business or organization takes the care and time to display our “Stars and Stripes,” it reinforces patriotism to the entire community. You may recognize this display of patriotism by presenting a certificate of appreciation from your Auxiliary.
- **Flag Retirement Ceremonies** – These ceremonies honoring our Flag serve as one of the most beautiful forms of respect for our country. This is the perfect way to involve the whole family of Auxiliary and VFW members. Flag retirement ceremonies can also serve as an event to involve the entire community. For more information on this and other Flag etiquette, visit vfw.org/community/flag-etiquette.

Promote Patriotism – Celebrating Patriotic Holidays

Patriotic holidays are an opportune time to involve the whole family and bring community attention to your Auxiliary. When fun family events are presented to the community, prospective new members will walk through your door. Patriotic holidays can serve as the perfect way to show that your Auxiliary supports patriotism, veterans and their families as a top priority. For more information about patriotic days and ways to celebrate, visit vfwauxiliary.org/what-we-do/americanism.

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. March 29 marks the anniversary of when combat forces departed South Vietnam in 1973, even though some troops remained until their final departure in 1975.

Loyalty Day – May 1

On May 1, 1930, 10,000 VFW members staged a rally at New York's Union Square to promote patriotism. Through a resolution adopted in 1949, May 1 evolved into Loyalty Day.

Armed Forces Day – Third Saturday in May

A day to pay tribute to the men and women currently serving in our nation's armed forces.

Memorial Day – May 30 (Traditional)

Patriotism calls for all citizens to be reminded of the deaths of their 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 Recognition Day - Third Friday in September

POW/MIA Recognition Day honors the commitments and the sacrifices made by our nation's prisoners of war and those who are still missing in action. National POW/MIA Recognition Day, traditionally on the third Friday in September, is one of the six days specified by law on which the black POW/MIA flag shall be flown over federal facilities and cemeteries, post offices and military installations.

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 these special veterans. One way to honor these veterans and educate youth and 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.

Gold Star Mother's & Family's Day - Last Sunday in September

On this day, Americans are encouraged to display the Flag and hold appropriate ceremonies as a public expression of our nation's gratitude and respect for our Gold Star Mothers and Families.

Veterans Day – November 11

This is an opportunity to honor the brave men and women, both living and deceased, who fought America's battles past and present.

Pearl Harbor Day – December 7

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

Branch of Service Birth Dates

- **U.S. Army** - June 14, 1775
- **U.S. Marine Corps** - November 10, 1775
- **U.S. Navy** - October 13, 1775
- **U.S. Air Force** - September 18, 1947
- **U.S. Coast Guard** - August 4, 1790
- **U.S. National Guard** - December 13, 1636

Military Flags Order of Precedence

According to Department of Defense guidelines, military service flags, insignias, etc., should be displayed in the following order (left to right as you face the flags): Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.

Star Family Recognition

You may have seen a blue star, gold star or silver star service flag or service banner in the window of a home in your area. A service flag or service banner is a banner approved by the Secretary of Defense that family members of those serving in the United States Armed Forces can display.

- Blue Star Families can display a flag or banner with a white field and a red border, with a blue star for each family member serving in the United States Armed Forces during any period of war or hostilities.
- Gold Star Families can display a flag or banner with a white field and a red border, with a gold star that represents a family member who died during military operations.
- Silver Star Families can display a flag or banner with a blue field with an outer red and inner white border, with a silver star that represents a family member who was injured, wounded or became ill during or as a result of combat.

You are encouraged to recognize and honor these families in your community.

Americanism Program Awards

AWARDS FOR MEMBERS

1. Citation to one Patriotic Instructor in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best patriotic education. Criteria and entry form (required) available at vfwauxiliary.org/resources. Entry forms are due to the Department Americanism Chairman by March 31, 2022.

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

AWARDS FOR AUXILIARIES

1. Most outstanding use of the #AuxiliaryPatriotism hashtag in a social media post.
 - Citation to every Auxiliary that uses the #AuxiliaryPatriotism hashtag on social media. Criteria and entry form (required) available at vfwauxiliary.org/resources. Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Americanism Chairman by March 31, 2022.

The Department Americanism Chairman must send a copy of all submitted entry forms to National Headquarters by April 30, 2022.

Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.

- Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences with the most outstanding use of the #AuxiliaryPatriotism hashtag in a social media post.

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

AWARDS FOR DEPARTMENTS AND DEPARTMENT CHAIRMEN

1. Citation to each Department Americanism Chairman for participation in this Program.
2. \$25 VFW Store Gift Certificate to one Department Americanism Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion to build awareness of the #AuxiliaryPatriotism hashtag campaign.
3. Outstanding Performance Award in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on criteria listed on Page 5 and for the promotion of Program Goals listed at the top of Page 9.