



# VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS MASON DIXON POST 7234

## SEPTEMBER 2023

### COMMANDER'S CORNER

Howdy, Post members,

We've coming to the end of our summer season. It's been a successful season. Our major



evenings have increased in attendance. The kitchen crews have put together a new program to ease) the lines, and so far its working well, no complaints. The outside deck has been replaced and a few new tables have been added. The ceiling in the bar

area had to be replaced. An odd and severe wind storm blew up between the roof and ceiling knocking down an 8 ft by 10 ft. section. Sending ripples throughout the entire bar ceiling. No one was injured. I happened to be there door monitoring. I have to thank Karen Vitsorek, who stepped right in and cleared the bar area and kept everyone at bay. I call her the Commanders (Girl Friday.) Thanks Karen. The post was honored this year with the "Community Service Award".

My thanks go out to all who contributed, Captain John Gossart and the honor guard, Debbie Jensen and her outreach volunteers. Along with all officers who visited seniors, veteran's homes and donations to food banks along with participation in Meals on Wheels. The

award now sits on the side bar in the post. Its permanent home will be at the entrance to the post.

A questionnaire will be handed out at the door, asking what if any changes you would like to see take place or added to our Post. After all it's your Post. If it can be accomplished it will. Already, the Army / Navy game program is being discussed. The auxiliary is holding it seconded Freedom Festival on August 26, Saturday. Will be planning a "Meet your new Post Officers and Board of Directors." A volunteer orientation to inform the new members on the joys of helping our veterans. Also, the week after the super bowl the entire wood floor from entrance to dining room and dance area will be replaced with a new one. All ceiling fans will soon be replace with new and better ones. As you see a lot is planned over the fall and winter months!

We still have one Sunday brunch and an afternoon burgers and dogs left. Then comes football season - Bring a dish will be back, chili cook off, Bar Olympic, Veterans Day Nov. 11. And the best part of the summer ending. LESS TRAFFIC

Signing off  
Jim Jensen,  
Commander post7234

PS. Chicken shack still has a few weeks left. Thursday crab night is still available through September. Remember to call you order in Wednesday by 2 pm

## AUXILIARY PRESIDENT

Labor Day weekend and the unofficial end to summer is here, and what a busy summer it has been. I would like to thank all our members who volunteer, as August was a busy month volunteering for events at the post, door monitoring, and handling our program duties of the Auxiliary. On August 19th several Officers and Chairpersons of our

Auxiliary attended the School of Instruction for Auxiliary programs held in Seaford. Our Treasurer Roberta Walter, who is also Department Chairperson for Auxiliary Outreach, had a nice presentation explaining her program. I hope all came away with a little more knowledge and something they could use to improve their programs.



On August 26th our Youth and Americanism programs held our 2nd Family Freedom Festival. This event included an inflatable obstacle course donated by Rent-Equip, military vehicles by Doc. Hattier and gang, Ocean City Cruisers Car Club and their classic cars, the Life of a Soldier presented by our own Ty Magliola, patriotic photo booth, our local first responders Ocean View Police and Millville Volunteer Fire Co., patriotic scavenger hunt, Diego the Magician,

food and treats. This was a free event open to the community. Donations for our local food bank were received from attendees. Weather was hot but a good time was had by all. A big thank you to the many Auxiliary Volunteers, Post Volunteers and family and friends who worked so hard to make this happen. There are too many to list, but your hard work made this a great day. Thank You all! (see enclosed photos of the event and volunteers and see our face book page for more photos).



On September 29th at the Post, Auxiliary Youth Chair Cindy Weese and Post Youth Chair Chad Myers met with Special Educator Teacher Lisa Stetler from Selbyville Middle School. She was presented with 2 checks for supplies and school items to use in the classroom adopted by the Auxiliary and Post.



September will continue as a busy month with celebrations and remembrance. We celebrate Labor Day and remember 9/11, MIA Day, and Gold Star Families. Annual Veterans Stand Down will be held on Sept. 22nd in Dover, De spotlighting Veteran Services. Football season starts, so come cheer your team on at the post. Our Raffle for the Patriotic 36"x20" Hand carved wooden wall flag, 62"x50" Handmade Crochet Flag afghan, Patriotic Handmade Ceramic truck & 2 patriotic gnomes will be coming to an end with the drawing taking place on September 4, 2023 at the Post. Tickets are \$5.00 each/ 3 for \$10.00. Don't miss out. A reminder to our Annual members that annual dues have increased to \$50.00 per year. Consider converting to lifetime membership when you receive 2024 dues renewal. I will say again that typically on average 3 years of annual dues would be about the same cost as a lifetime membership. Consider it. Continue to bring in your BJ's coupons for ice cream. There is an envelope on the wall by the cash register for them. Monthly meetings are the first Monday of the month at 7:00 pm.

I hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday weekend. Labor Day is a holiday that honors the achievement and contributions of the American workers and is celebrated with picnics, cookouts, and time at the beach by many

people. As an Auxiliary, it is time to relax for a few days and take pride in the work for our veterans that we have done over the past year. Take the time to recharge and prepare for the efforts to come. Although Labor Day is not an official holiday to celebrate our military, we can always find ways to be creative in honoring our veterans and active duty military. It's a good time to acknowledge the extraordinary work done by our active duty service people to maintain a safe America. It's one of the reasons we can all enjoy a holiday weekend. We should also acknowledge the work of our Veterans, and their service and sacrifice. Remember, for many of these people, Labor Day is like every day of the year – a day of work and sacrifice. Because when people choose careers of service like military duty, there are things more important than holidays and picnics. Rather than just celebrating work, the work itself is a celebration of values.

Dale Weese, Jr.,  
President Auxiliary 7234  
(443) 324-1244  
[aux7234.de@gmail.com](mailto:aux7234.de@gmail.com)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOTES

For those who don't know me, I am a 28 year Navy Veteran, retiring in 2021. I served in Iraq, Pentagon, California, South Carolina, Iceland and Italy. Many of my tours were spent working on manpower, funding and personnel policy, including my last tour on the staff of the Secretary of the Navy. I am looking forward to meeting more of you at the Post now that my grandchildren have gone home. As the Chairman of the Board, I am turning my attention to the fall and the "off-season". The Commander has asked I chair the newly formed Events Committee. In the coming days you will see an interest form (at end of newsletter) asking what events you would like to see at the Post. We ask that you fill out a form and return to the Post before September 23. The committee will



review the list and hopefully, find some new events to bring everyone into the Post for camaraderie.

Also, I am chairing our committee for the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen essay contests. Do you have children or grandchildren in grades 9-12 or 6-8? I bet you and/or their parents would love to have some college money!

Forward the information about the contest to them! Applications and essays must be returned to the Post by midnight on October 31, 2023. Our Post, along with the Auxiliary, will award prize money to 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. The 1st place winner will then compete at the District level, for a chance to move to State and National contests. At the national level, the top award for grades 9-12 is valued at \$35,000, and 6-8 grades valued at \$5,000. (forms at end of newsletter)

Sharon Ruest  
Chairman  
Board of Directors

## CHAPLAINS' CORNER

Our deepest sympathy goes out to the families who have lost loved ones. Eternal rest grant unto them O' Lord, may the perpetual light shine upon them, and may they rest in peace. Amen.



*Harry A. Ursone*

**With Honor & Gratitude  
We Remember** Please call Phyllis Scully at 302-381-539-9981 for the VFW or Eileen Healy at 302-539-9981 for the Auxiliary, if a member is sick or has passed away.

## SERVICE OFFICER OUTREACH

**WARNO: They call themselves "Coaches" or "Consultants" and advertise their ability to assist you with your VA benefits claim but may not be accredited to practice before the VA. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau**

Congress recently passed the Honoring our



Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, (PACT Act), to extend VA health care and expand benefits eligibility to veterans who were exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances during their military service. The

PACT Act added over 20 medical conditions which will now be presumed to be connected to military service dating back to the Vietnam Era, Gulf War, and Post 9/11. Unfortunately, there has been an influx of predatory advertisements, which purport to help veterans—often through the guise of “medical consulting” or “benefits coaching”—submit their initial claims to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for a fee. But unauthorized assistance in claim preparation is illegal: only VA-accredited representatives are permitted to assist veterans with their benefits claims, and VA-accredited representatives are not permitted to charge a fee for their assistance on a veteran’s initial benefits claim. We have heard reports that unscrupulous actors have misled some veterans into paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in illegal fees. There have also been advertisements and commercials aimed at veterans who were stationed at Camp Lejeune seeking to represent them in litigation related to section 804 of the PACT Act, which is referred to as the Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA). Although private litigation is not subject to the VA accreditation process (attorneys are subject to the rules governing attorneys in their respective states and courts), any attorney seeking benefits on behalf of a veteran directly from the VA under the CLJA must still be accredited by the VA. Know your Rights - You have the right to select your own representation in pursuing your benefits claim with the VA so long as the organization or individual that you select has been authorized to practice before VA. Anyone who prepares benefits claims without proper authorization is breaking the law. VA accredits representatives of Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), attorneys, and claims agents to help VA claimants pursue their benefits claims before

**VA. The VA accreditation process is designed to provide you with certain protections ensuring you receive competent assistance throughout the VA claim process and are not charged excessive fees. If you believe the fee charged by your VA-accredited attorney or claims agent was unreasonable, VA provides a process for you to file a motion with VA's Office of General Counsel (OGC) for review of the fee. Moreover, if a VA-accredited attorney or claims agent charges you a fee merely for assisting in filling out a VA form or for preparing an initial claim for VA benefits, you can file a complaint with OGC, and they could lose their VA accreditation. Only VA-accredited attorneys and claims agents may charge you a fee to represent you, and only after VA has issued its initial decision on your claim. VSO representatives may never charge a fee for their assistance on your VA benefits claim. Unfortunately, unaccredited individuals and organizations are aggressively soliciting veterans and attempting to coerce them to pay illegal fees—often requesting that veterans sign a contract for a percentage of their retroactive or future benefits in exchange for the preparation of their initial claims. Not only are these fees unlawful, but the payment terms can leave Veterans with unaffordable bills for extended periods of time. These unscrupulous actors often insist that they are not bound by the laws governing practice before VA because they are merely “coaches” or “consultants.” We have even heard reports that these illegal bills are being sent to third-party debt collectors if the veteran does not pay. The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA) applies to the activities of third-party debt collectors and is subject to enforcement by the CFPB as well as other regulators and consumers themselves.**

**Tools and Resources Veterans have several tools at their disposal to ensure they are being treated fairly by any person or organization offering assistance applying for VA disability benefits: 1. Seek a VA-accredited attorney, claims agent, or VSO representative. The VA Office of General Counsel (OGC) maintains a list of all attorneys, claims agents, and VSO representatives accredited by VA to assist veterans in preparing, presenting, and prosecuting claims for VA benefits. You can search this list by name, state, or zip code. We recommend you use the list to confirm and validate VA accreditation before**

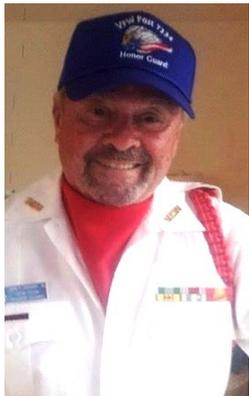
**signing any contact or appointing someone to represent you on your VA benefits claim. 2. Ensure that a VA Form 21-22 or 21-22A, which officially appoints your representative, is on file with VA. This form is how VA knows who is assisting you with your claim. If the individual or organization that you appoint using one of these forms is not authorized to represent you, VA will promptly notify you. No person or organization may represent you before VA without submitting one of these forms. There is a one-time exception provided under the law whereby a non-accredited individual may be authorized to provide representation to one Veteran on a single benefit claim so long as the individual is doing it free of charge and has filed a VA Form 21-22a with VA. Be on the lookout for individuals or agents who insist they are “coaches” or “consultants” and are therefore not required to submit these forms to VA. 3. Report frauds and scams; If you believe an individual or organization is misrepresenting themselves as a VA accredited attorney or claims agent, or a VA-recognized VSO qualified to assist veterans with their claims for VA benefits, or misrepresenting their affiliation with VA or a VA-recognized VSO, you may: Report attorneys misrepresenting their VA-accreditation status to their respective state attorney disciplinary commission • Contact your state Attorney General for possible violations of state laws • File a complaint with VA's OIG's hotline • File a complaint with VA's Accreditation, Discipline, and Fees program • File a report with the Federal Trade Commission to report a fraud or scam. • Submit a complaint to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) if you have an issue with debt collection or other consumer financial products and services.**

**In Comradeship,  
H. Rich Fales, Post Service Officer  
Cell: (301) 325-3813  
Email: [Smokey1st@netzero.net](mailto:Smokey1st@netzero.net)**



## HONOR GUARD NEWS

The Honor Guard participated in the funeral of Wesley Sauble at the Veterans Cemetery on August 4<sup>th</sup> with a Volley and Taps. Comrade Sauble was a



Past Post Commander of our Post (1987-88) and life member. He served 2 tours in Vietnam as a Green Beret with Special Forces. Rest in peace, Comrade!

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Honor Guard, especially our younger members, please contact me. I plan to conduct an orientation over the

summer months.

John F. Gossart, Jr.  
Captain of the Honor Guard  
240-304-8183

[Judge800@yahoo.com](mailto:Judge800@yahoo.com)

Or:

Mike Schiffer

Assistant Captain of the Honor Guard

[Rschiffer0@gmail.com](mailto:Rschiffer0@gmail.com)

\*The purpose of the Honor Guard is to provide funeral honors for our fallen comrades and guard national monuments. An Honor Guard may also serve as the 'guardians of the colors' "by displacing and escorting the national flag on ceremonial occasions at official functions."

## CANTEEN CORNER

Wow, what a summer. I would first like to thank all the volunteers that worked all the events. Without you we would not be able to have the success that we had. Job Well Done.

We will finish the Summer over Labor Day Weekend. On Sunday from 8-12pm we will have our last Brunch for the Summer. Brunch includes all the regular breakfast items plus a Roast Beef carving station and Steamed Shrimp. This is an AYCE event for \$14.

NFL Football season starts on Thurs 9/7. Here at the Post we have Football Sundays. Come in at 1pm to watch the games of the week (Ravens, Eagles, and Commanders) and bring a covered dish to share at halftime. If cooking is not your thing, a dessert from the store will be just fine.

We will continue Crabs on Thursday for the month of September. I would like to Thank the Staff of Rippons Seafood in Ocean City for supplying us all summer long.

On 9/1 tickets for our Fall Bull & Oyster Roast will go on sale. This event will be held on Saturday 10/7 at 3pm. This AYCE event will feature, Raw Oysters, Oyster Stew, Sausage & Green Peppers, Pit Beef, Baked Beans, Potato Salad, Cole Slaw, and all the fixins. Tickets are \$45pp and can be bought at the bar. Table assignments will be given when tickets are purchased. This is one of our most popular events, so get your tickets early and do not get shut out.

Please remember those in our community who need our help. Items for the Food Bank can be left in the Lobby anytime the Post is open.

See you at the Post

Mark

## VFW GOLF ASSOCIATION

VFW Golf Association members play golf each Tuesday at the Salt Pond Golf Course. Register to play by sending an email to [vfwgolf7234@gmail.com](mailto:vfwgolf7234@gmail.com) NLT noon on the Monday before the date of play. All are welcome!!! Please note that beginning September 5 our times change to showup at 8:30 a.m. for a 9:00 a.m. tee time.

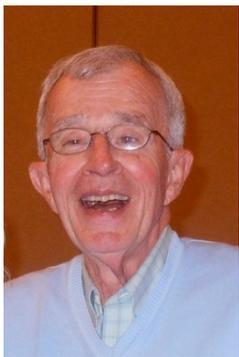
The Golf Association is sponsoring a golf tournament on September 12 at the Salt Pond Golf Course to benefit Home of the Brave Foundation. Join us for a fun filled day of golf. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. with a 9:00 a.m. shotgun start. It will be a scramble format with lunch and awards immediately after play concludes. Green fees and cart are \$60 per golfer (\$40 for Salt Pond Members). Please contact Bill Sadtler at 301-461-5769 or [sadtler@msn.com](mailto:sadtler@msn.com) for more information.

If you are interested in joining the Golf Association, please contact our President, Ken Smith, at 267-228-7285 or [madriverven1946@gmail.com](mailto:madriverven1946@gmail.com) for more information.

Ed Pike

## TRY TO BREAK THIS RECORD

There are some important dates in September to remember, like 9/11, and others to also celebrate, like



the birthday of the U.S. Air Force on September 18. I was going to write an article about Francis Scott Key drafting “The Star-Spangled Banner” in the dawn’s early light on September 14, 1814, and why it didn’t become our National Anthem until 1931. But then that idea was overtaken by the most

astounding news: record-

breaking belching. In August, the Washington Post reported that a woman in Virginia had broken the world record for the loudest burp by a woman. Guinness World Records announced that the burp broke a previous 14-year-old record. It was measured at 107.3 decibels, louder than a blender, electric drill and some motorcycles. To qualify, the burp had to be recorded by a sound engineer in a quiet room with a microphone 8 feet 2 inches from the challenger, with two witnesses for confirmation. The loud and proud challenger in this case prepared with a Dunkin’ Donuts iced coffee; a sausage, egg and cheese croissant; and a Coors Light beer just before the successful event.

Accomplishments like this just don’t happen. It takes practice and persistence. The new belching record holder, a 33-year-old mother of two, has been developing her special skill for years, at least since high school, surprising and sometimes embarrassing family and friends and getting a lot of laughs along the way. Her reputation grew and she eventually built a following on Tik Tok videos burping after eating different foods. Then she was ready to try for the world record. And this one has to be one of the most unusual and impressive Guinness records. Consider the following.

**Other records.** There are a lot of unusual Guinness records, including for example:

- A man who holds the record for sticking the most toothpicks (3500) into his beard;
- A man who was able to stuff 400 drinking straws in his mouth and hold them there for ten seconds;
- A woman who set a record (14.65 seconds) crushing three watermelons between her thighs;
- A man who set a world record pinching 51 clothes pins to his face in one minute (ouch);
- A woman who established a record for the farthest tight rope walk in high heels by walking 24 feet 7.2 inches on a tight rope and then back again, twice

breaking the previous record; and my second personal favorite,

A man with the record for the fastest time typing a message with the nose, by accurately typing a Guinness-prescribed 103-character note in 46.30 seconds.

No contest. . .yet. As impressive as all those records are, none of them are as immediately useful in a boring situation as a good loud burp. And like the woman who is able to crush watermelons with her thighs, the belching is a natural talent, but much more easily demonstrated in an everyday public setting. All things considered, especially the laugh bonus, the burp record is at the top of my list. The question now is whether anyone at the Post is up to the challenge of surpassing the current Guinness decibel record level. We’ll be listening.

Looking forward to September, here are some dates to keep in mind, in addition to all the events on the Post calendar.

- Sept. 2. Anniversary of the formal surrender of Japan in WW II onboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay in 1945.
- Sept. 4. Labor Day (established as a federal legal holiday in 1894).
- Sept. 11. Patriot Day. Annual observance of 9/11 to remember all those who died or were injured in the Islamic terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001. (Never forget.)
- Sept. 14. On this day in 1814, Francis Scott Key wrote “The Star-Spangled Banner” during the British attack on Ft. McHenry in the War of 1812 (then in its third year).
- Sept. 15. National POW/MIA Recognition Day.
- Sept. 17. Constitution and Citizenship Day. On this day in 1787, the Constitutional Convention approved the Constitution of the United States. The first ten amendments, the Bill of Rights, were ratified later by the states effective on December 15, 1791.
- Sept. 18. Birthday of the U.S. Air Force (established in 1947).
- Sept. 23. Autumn begins.
- Sept. 24. Gold Star Mothers and Family Day.
- Sept. 29. VFW Day (established in 1899).

Hope you enjoy every day in September.

Jerry Hardiman

## LITTLE KNOWN FACTS

The VFW chicken shack will sell 25 cases of Barbeque chicken on any given Saturday. Each case holds 28 half chickens

On cheese steak night the crew can produce upwards of 200 sandwiches in 3 hrs.

On Sunday breakfast or brunch an average of 300 patrons or more are served in 4 hrs. And it's all you can eat.

And the fact is. It's all done by volunteers.

Jim Jensen

## HELP A VET PROGRAM

Volunteers needed to help with this special program. We are reaching out to all of our VFW Post 1200 members to say hello, see how they are, and see if there is anything we can do for them. ALL Post members are invited to help. If you are interested in joining us, please contact.

Frank (semperfi-marines@mediacombb.net)

## VOLUNTEERS ALWAYS NEEDED

As we start this new year the Commander has several committees that need volunteers. As stated above there is the Help a Vet Program. The Events Committee has sent out a questionnaire, so when they decide what events to pursue they will be asking for volunteers, The Grant Committee is focusing on obtaining Grants from the VFW Foundation to pursue many activities to help Veterans and those in our community which will require volunteers, the Communications committee is developing a new Web site and email system and an enhanced social media presence. We are also seeking writers for articles in Newsletter, VFW Magazine, Auxiliary Magazine, local papers etc. As always we value all the many volunteers that help with Honor Guard, Breakfast, Chicken Shack, Burgers on Sunday, Flip Five on the floor and in the kitchen, Crabs, grounds crews, Special Auxiliary and Post Programs, all the other functions in the canteen and all volunteers who help with the many ad hoc events that come up. If you are interested in helping please contact any of the officers or [vfwpost7234@gmail.com](mailto:vfwpost7234@gmail.com).

# BULL & OYSTER ROAST

**Saturday October 7**

**Tickets on sale 9/1 \$45 pp**

## MEMORIAL BRICKS



You can still purchase bricks. We will always continue to accept bricks forever. We still have space for more than 2000. As we worked with each of you buying bricks we felt the emotions you held in your heart to honor or to remember your loved ones. This will truly be a special place to visit and feel the radiation of Love, Honor, and Respect for those who served this Country and this Post. Thank you to those who have purchased bricks and to those who have not we hope you will consider purchasing a lasting tribute to someone who served this Country and our Post. God Bless You.



## LEADERSHIP TEAM

Commander	James Jensen
Sr. Vice Cmdr	Sharon Ruest
Jr. Vice Cmdr	Chad Myers
Quartermaster	Bill Healy
Adjutant	Fulton Loppatto
Chaplain	Phyllis Scully
Judge Advocate	John Gossart Jr.
Surgeon	Richard Wagner
Officer of the Day	Andy Artemchuk
Guard	Jeff Ringel
Service Officer	Rich Fales
Honor Guard Capt	John Gossart Jr.
Trustee	Danny Steele
Trustee	Skip Coale
Trustee	Rob Gill

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman	Sharon Ruest
President	James Jensen
Vice President	Chuck Guido
Treasurer	Bill Healy
Secretary	Ken Weber
Board Member	Chad Myers
Board Member	Fulton Loppatto
Board Member	Mike Tuckman
Board Member	John Mitchell
Board Member	Rick Delaney
Board Member	John Hickman

## AUXILIARY TEAM

President	Dale Weese
Sr Vice Pres	Karen Ware
Jr Vice Pres	Theo Loppatto
Secretary	Ty Magliola
Treasurer	Roberta Walter
Chaplain	Eileen Healy
Guard	Shirley Stong
Conductress	Connie Weber
Patriotic Ins	Peg Atkins
Trustee	Connie Weber
Trustee	Debbie Vischer-Jensen
Trustee	Debra Craven

### Veteran Claims Assistance

Our state Veterans Service Officer comes to our Post the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month at 1:30PM; to make an appointment you can contact him at [david.hilliard@va.gov](mailto:david.hilliard@va.gov) or 302-994-2511 ext 7586

### FOOD BANK

**Please continue to drop off food items at the entry way. We continue to support our local families in need. Thank you for your donations.**

**VFW POST 7234 HONOR GUARD  
TO BECOME A MEMBER, PLEASE  
CONTACT JOHN GOSSART  
240-304-8183**

### HELP A VET PROGRAM

**Veterans - Need help assistance, a friendly call, a visit, etc.  
Contact our Post: 302-539-9981 or  
[Vfwpost7234@gmail.com](mailto:Vfwpost7234@gmail.com)**

### Member Sick or Deceased

**Please call:  
For VFW – Phyllis Scully 302-539-9981  
For Aux – Eileen Healy 302-539-9981**

### Assistance with VA claims or benefits

**Please call:  
Rich Fales (301)325-3813 or email me at  
[Smokey1st@netzero.net](mailto:Smokey1st@netzero.net)**

**For the Latest Updates and News  
Please send your email to  
[vfwpost7234@gmail.com](mailto:vfwpost7234@gmail.com)**

## 2023-2024 Theme

# “What are the greatest attributes of our Democracy?”

**Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2023**

**Patriotic Audio Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$35,000 Award**

### What is the Voice of Democracy Program?

Since 1947, the Voice of Democracy has been the Veterans of Foreign Wars' (VFW's) premier scholarship program. Each year, nearly 27,000 high school students compete for more than \$2 million in scholarships and incentives. Students compete by writing and recording an audio essay on an annual patriotic theme. This year's theme is, “**What are the greatest attributes of our Democracy?**”

### Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, state and national level. Department (State) winners receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington DC, to tour the city, be honored by the VFW and its Auxiliary and receive their portion of \$171,000 in national awards, the top scholarship being \$35,000.

### The Rules

#### Who can enter?

The Voice of Democracy is open to students in grades 9-12 by the Oct. 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application for which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Foreign exchange students, students age 20 or over, previous Voice of Democracy first place state winners, GED or Adult Education Students are ineligible.

#### What do I need to enter?

Record your original 3-5 minute (+ or - 5 second max.) audio essay on a flash drive, or other electronic device. You will submit the recording, typed essay and this completed entry form. Provide these items to your school/group competition or VFW Post for judging. In addition you can submit your emailed entry form, essay, and audio file to the VFW Post upon approval. You must be the sole author of your essay. The recording must be in your own voice and in English. Hearing/speech impaired students should email the Voice of Democracy National Office at [youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org) for special instructions. No music, singing, poetry or sound effects are allowed. The body of the essay must not identify you in any way, (including, but not limited to your name, school, city, state, race, or national origin) although the recording & typed essay should be labeled with your name, to show ownership.

### Where Do I Submit My Entry?

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. Entries sent to VFW National will be returned. One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions: First, visit this website [vfw.org/FindaPost](http://vfw.org/FindaPost) to “Find A VFW Post.” If you do not have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble getting in touch with them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit this link <https://www.vfw.org/ContactUs/> and look for “Find a State Contact” to get your VFW state office's phone number and email. If you still need assistance, please email us at VFW National Headquarters at [youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org)

### What Is the Deadline for My Entry?

All entries competing at the Post level must be in the hands of that VFW Post by midnight, **Oct. 31, 2023**. It is the responsibility of the student to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location by ensuring it is a participating Post.

### What Are the Judging Criteria?

#### Originality is worth 30 points:

Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

#### Content is worth 35 points:

Clearly express your ideas in an organized manner. Fully develop your theme and use transitions to move smoothly from one idea to another.

#### Delivery is worth 35 points:

Speak in a clear and credible manner.

# 2023-2024 Official Entry Form Voice of Democracy Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

( )

Phone

Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

Grade in School

Age

Jacket Size

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and Email (if applicable)

## To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian

(Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

( )

Parent/Guardian Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian Email

## Participant Agreement for Students Advancing to National Level

If selected as a first-place state winner, I have the consent of my parent/guardian and school to attend the Voice of Democracy National Finals in Washington, D.C. as a guest of the VFW National Organization. In consideration for permission to participate in the National Voice of Democracy Competition ("Competition") I do hereby, for myself, for my heirs, executors, administrators and assignees, waive, release and discharge all rights and claims which I have or which may hereafter accrue against the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and/or the Departments (state organizations) of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and their respective officers, agents, successors and assigns from any damages which may be sustained by me in connection with my participation in or association with the Competition and/or arising out of any travel related to the Competition. In the event of sickness, accident or injury in connection with the Competition, I consent to and accept the services of a duly licensed medical, surgical or dental specialist selected on my behalf and for such treatments, as they may deem necessary. I understand that VFW will not be liable for such treatment. I further understand that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States retains non-exclusive rights to use my audio file, essay, name and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

## I Have Read and Understand the Rules and Participant Agreement

I certify that I am the sole author of the enclosed audio/essay entry and that I have only entered the competition once yearly if otherwise eligible. I understand that if it is found that I have entered any other Post's competition or used this essay for another VFW competition, I face elimination from the competition and will return any and all prizes or incentives awarded.

Signature of Student Participant

Date

## To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post Level Voice of Democracy Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature

Post #

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (if applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of students participating

No. of winners advanced to District

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarship awards \$

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$

## To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Voice of Democracy Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Departments.

District Chairperson Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

( )

Phone

Email

## To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature

( )

Daytime Phone

Email

The winner  has been  will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on \_\_\_\_\_.

For assistance contact:  
816.968.1155  
Email: [youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org)

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: Sharon Ruest

Phone: (302)539-9981

Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Contact: [vfwpost7234@gmail.com](mailto:vfwpost7234@gmail.com)

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_



## 2023-2024 Theme

### “How are you inspired by America?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2023

Patriotic Written Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$5,000 Award

#### What is the Patriot's Pen Program?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 73,000 students who participated last year in this contest.

#### Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, State and national level. Department (State) winners receive a portion of \$55,000 in national awards. National Winners will receive at least \$500. **The first-place national award is currently \$5,000.**

The Internal Revenue Service requires a recipient awarded more than \$599 be given Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable income. This may require the winner to provide their social security number.

#### How Does the Contest Work?

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where the one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition.

#### Who Can Enter?

Patriot's Pen is open to 6th, 7th and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. (Foreign exchange students or former winners that placed in the National contest are ineligible.)

#### How Do I Get Started?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing contest.
- Contact a participating VFW Post and indicate your interest in participating.

- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its VFW Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of October 31, 2023. You can submit your essay and entry form by email upon the Post's approval. Entries sent to the VFW National Headquarters directly will be returned.

#### How Am I Judged?

##### Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:

You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.

##### Theme development is worth 35 points:

Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.

##### Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:

Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

#### What Is the Theme?

VFW's Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year's theme. The 2023-2024 theme is:

**“How are you inspired by America?”**

#### Deadline Information.

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring VFW Post by midnight October 31, 2023.

#### Note:

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions:

First, visit [vfw.org/FindaPost](http://vfw.org/FindaPost) to “Find a VFW Post.”

If you don't have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble contacting them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) headquarters office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit [vfw.org/contactus](http://vfw.org/contactus) to look for “Find a State Contact” to get your VFW state office's phone number and email.

**For assistance contact  
the VFW National Headquarters  
at 816.968.1155  
Email: [youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org)**

# 2023-2024 Official Entry Form Patriot's Pen Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

( )

Phone

Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

Grade in School

Essay Word Count

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and Email (if applicable)

## To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian

(Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

( )

Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian's Email

## What Are the Rules?

• You must write your own essay.

• All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics. 300 - 400 words in length (+ or - 5 word max). Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count.

• In no way may contestants identify themselves within their essay (including, but not limited to, your name, school, city, state, race or national origin.) Do not put your name on the essay. The entry form is your essays cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once each year if otherwise eligible (one Post competition).

• The essay must be contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to the use of your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

• At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

## I Have Read and Understand the Contest Rules

Signature of Student Participant

Date

## To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Patriot's Pen Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature

Post#

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (If applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of participants

No. of winners

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarships awards \$

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (Banquet, Pins, etc.) \$

## To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Patriot's Pen Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Department.

District Chairperson Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

( )

Phone

Email

## To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Patriot's Pen Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature

( )

Daytime Phone

Email

The winner  has been  will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on \_\_\_\_\_.

## Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_



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# WE NEED YOUR INPUT! WE WANT YOUR INPUT!

## HELP US TO IMPROVE YOUR VFW POST

Mason Dixon VFW Post 7234 and Post Auxiliary Leadership requests your input by completing the below survey / questionnaire.

**Which of the following events would you actively participate in: (Mark All That Apply)**

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| _____ Trivia Night   | _____ Shuffleboard, Darts, Corn Hole Night       |
| _____ Disc Jockey    | _____ Live Music (Band, Solo Artist, Duet)       |
| _____ Karaoke Night  | _____ Friday Food Theme Night (Italian, Mexican) |
| _____ Wine Tastings  | _____ Line Dancing (with Instruction, if needed) |
| _____ Comedy Night   | _____ Murder Mystery Night                       |
| _____ Magician Night | _____ Casino Night                               |

**Do you have your own event ideas? Let us know what they are in the below space:**

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**Thank You for helping to make YOUR VFW Post even better!**