

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

Chairman: Al Griffith
406 Shannon Way
Roseville, CA 95678-5136
916-995-5809 - Cell
E-mail: vfwpost4647@surewest.net

THEME: “Does America Still Have Heroes”

SPONSORSHIP: Posts and Auxiliaries should work together on the program. As has been the case for many years, more than one (1) Post may conduct the Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program at a single school; however, each student will be allowed to choose the Post that will sponsor that student. The Auxiliary to a Post may conduct the program if the Post does not. **See the National Program Guide “It’s about Service” for additional information. The entry forms are available at www.vfw.org or from the chairman.**

HOW TO REPORT

Post Chairmen: Get your Post’s winning entry to your District chairman as soon as possible, but not later than 15 November. Be sure you and your Auxiliary chair have signed the entry form in the space provided, and you have provided all Post information requested on the entry form. You do not need a photo of your winner, nor do you need a permission form. If your student wins the District competition, then the District chairman will need a photo, so be prepared.

District Chairmen:

1. You need to send the District winner’s package to the State Chairman by December 11, 2009. The package includes the completed student entry form (both sides) properly signed, a typed copy of the winner’s essay and the recording of the essay. Please contact your winner and let him or her know that they will need to go to Sacramento to represent your District at the State level, and if selected as the state winner, they will be expected to attend the Voice of Democracy National Finals in Washington D.C. Both trips will be paid for by the VFW for the student. The trip to Sacramento will be January 21-23, 2010 and the National trip will be early April.
2. Please send a “clear, close-up shot of head and shoulders” to the State chairman not later than January 15, 2010. This is required for the state winner’s entry to the National level.
3. Send the completed “District Voice of Democracy Report Form” and the “District Voice of Democracy Participation Report Summary” to the state chairman not later than January 15, 2010. These Report Forms have been distributed to your District Commander at the State Convention. They are also available on the Department website and from the state chairman.

All related Voice of Democracy activities, such as award presentations (other than the student entry form) should be reported on-line via the Department website under **Youth Activities** at <http://www.vfwca.org/membertools/programform12rpt.html> or by submitting a report (Form-12) to the Department Voice of Democracy Chairman.

AWARDS

A plaque will be awarded for the most outstanding Post and District Voice of Democracy Program as determined by the Chairman.

Important! – To qualify for awards a Post or District must send a copy of the Program Reporting (Form-12) to the Department Chairman will supporting documentation.

DEPARTMENT DEADLINES FOR 2009-2010:

Student Entry to the Post

November 1, 2009

Post Deadline for Post Winner to District Chairman

November 15, 2009

District Deadline for District Winner to State Chairman

December 11, 2009

There are no exceptions to the December 11, 2009 deadline.

ADVANCING SCHOOL WINNERS: The following is quoted from the National VFW Program Chairmen's Guide, "It's About Service."

"Local Competition Alternatives: In recent years, interviews with teachers and school leaders have indicated that teachers are often reluctant to encourage participation in our scholarship competition if they are required to take class time to have their students all complete entry forms and record their scripts. For this reason, we offer the teachers the following options: Teachers/youth leaders are encouraged to simply use Voice of Democracy as a written patriotic exercise. The teacher/leader has the option of:

1. Submitting all scripts and recordings to the Post for judging. Or:
2. Conducting a judging within the group and advancing one winner for every fifteen (15) participants.

Which option above is used is ultimately the decision of the Post chairman, working closely with the teacher, school official or youth group leader."

What does this mean? If the school takes option 2, then the Post may advance those winners provided by that school in addition to any other essays judged by the Post. To do this, get a list of all students that participated in the school competition on school letterhead. The Post then can take credit for all the students that participated at the school. Remember, 1 student may be selected for every 15 participating, same as at the Post level.

ADVANCING POST WINNERS: Posts may advance one winner for every fifteen (15) entries judged by the Post. The key words here are "judged by the Post." If you receive the winners from a school competition, as outlined above, they are not "judged by the Post." They have come to you already judged, and should be sent to District for judging.

If the Post has 1-15 entries to judge, then send one winner to District.

If the Post has 16-30 entries to judge, then send two winners to District.

There is NO maximum number of winners...advance winners based on the number of essays judged.

JUDGING PROCEDRES: The National VFW Programs Chairmen's Guide, "It's about Service" gives the standards for judging at all levels of competition. The Guide is quoted in part:

"Selection and use of five to nine judges is essentially the same for both programs (Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy) and at each level of competition. The best judges should be from outside your Post and represent education, broadcasting, corporate or community leadership. Local military recruiters also make excellent potential judges. They (judges) must not be connected in any way with the students in the competition."

"Select a judging site that avoids distractions. The chairman must be present for the judging and should review all essays/recordings several days before judging to allow students to correct minor discrepancies."

This quote is only part of the judging guidelines, and it is the responsibility of the chairmen, at all levels, to be thoroughly familiar with the judging criteria from National.

CONTEST AWARDS

POSTS: Students often take part in scholarship programs, such as our programs, to help defray the expenses of a college education. Every effort should be taken to make cash awards to your winners. Savings Bonds should also be considered. Many Posts and Auxiliaries have an "Awards Night" at their Post to recognize and honor the students, their parents and teachers. Also consider making awards presentations at the schools the students attend.

DISTRICTS: Districts should also recognize their District winners with cash awards whenever possible. You just can't get too much publicity. To help the District, your Department of California has established a program to recognize each of the twenty-four (24) District winners with an all expense paid trip to Sacramento. District winners will be the guest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of California and visit the State Capitol, meet the Governor, if available, talk with their legislators, tour many other sites of Sacramento, and attend the Department Official Voice of Democracy Awards Banquet, where the state winner will be announced. The banquet will be held on Friday, January 22, 2010 at the Hilton Hotel, in Sacramento, California. Each student will receive \$20.00 upon arrival to help defray expenses. Districts are asked to donate \$200.00 to the Department of California.

STATE: The first place winner at the state competition will receive a check for \$2,000.00. Each of the four other finalists will receive a check for \$1,000.00. The remaining District winners will each receive a check for \$200.00. In addition to the cash award, the State winner will receive a trip to Washington, D.C. in April, 2010, to compete for the National First Place Award of a \$30,000 scholarship. The state winner will also be invited to attend "Freedom's Foundation" a three day trip to Valley Forge, in June 2010.