VFW EDUCATION & TRAINING SERIES

VFW PROGRAMS

VFW Programs Overview (Pages 1-2)

Community Services, Youth Scholarships and Activities Programs(Pages 3-8)

Helpful Hints for Program Execution(pages 8-10)

Veterans & Military Support Programs(Pages 10-13)

VFW

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

Published/Revision Date: 110515

VFW Programs

The purpose of this document is to help educate all elected and appointed officers of the organization about programs in the organization, from youth programs & scholarships, community service, volunteer recognition, “Buddy”® Poppy, to all programs under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella. Additionally, it will have information concerning U.S. Flag issues and a variety of special projects. Our sole priority is helping your Post, District and Department serve your community and veterans in a meaningful way. For that reason, the VFW National Organization is committed to doing everything possible to serve you and make every opportunity count for you and for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The purpose of this section is twofold. First, we want to familiarize you as leaders of your Post, District or Department, with the fundamentals of our VFW programs and activities. As we do that, it is our goal then to encourage you and your existing leaders to participate to build that much needed relationship with your local community. We are convinced that good programs, properly executed, will do more for your Post than anything else you do.

Your programs are often the first impression that the public has of the VFW. Therefore it’s extremely important to be prepared and more importantly appoint the right persons as the program chairman. Your VFW programs are defined under two categories; ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities*** and ***Veterans & Military Support***. Within the ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities*** category we often refer to several program elements as our core programs. These are programs that are executed by the largest number of Posts and have the greatest impact on our organization, our communities and our veterans. Typically, these core programs are mandated for every Post as part of your Department All State Program and are heavily encouraged and supported by the VFW National organization. These core programs within the ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities*** include our scholarship programs; Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen, the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year program, Scouting, and “Buddy”® Poppy.

The second group of programs under the ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities*** umbrella, is called Special Projects and Activities, which cover Americanism, volunteer recognition, community service, awards and recognition and other miscellaneous youth activities. These programs are highly encouraged for all Posts and Departments and will be supported by the national organization upon request.

Before you can effectively execute our VFW programs, you first must know the programs. I recommend to all Post, District or Department officers and chairman, to carefully read the program chairman's guides to familiarize yourself with the programs that best fit your Post and your available resources. As a VFW leader, you should be able to speak intelligently and authoritatively about all aspects of our great organization.

The best available resource that we have available is our VFW website (www.vfw.org). I would strongly encourage you as officers and program chairman to establish a login. Doing so, will provide you access to all the information and materials concerning VFW Programs, but will also allow you to access additional information needed to help you execute your duties and responsibilities as an officer of the organization. Important items such as National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure & Ritual amendments and National Resolutions to be presented at the National Convention, our monthly National Headquarters Bulletin and General Orders, and several online fillable forms.

However, the most import benefit of having a login is being able to access MY ***VFW***, where you'll have access to all materials and information within our ***VFW Training and Suppor***t section. This section contains videos, promotional materials, chairman manuals and resources, and much more on all available areas of the organization.

VFW Programs Overview

Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities

Patriot's Pen

Originally created as the Youth Essay Contest, Patriot's Pen asks junior high and middle school students to write a 300–400 word essay on a new patriotic theme each year. Winners receive scholarships and begin by competing at the Post level. Winners proceed to District, Department and finally to the National level where they compete for the $5,000 first place scholarship. The themes and additional information concerning program execution can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities.***

Voice of Democracy

Similar to Patriot's Pen, is the Voice of Democracy Audio/Essay Contest. Since 1947, the VFW has asked high school students to write and record a 3 – 5 minute essay, again on a patriotic theme selected by the VFW each year. Students may record on an audio CD or flash drive. Like Patriot's Pen, Voice of Democracy winners receive scholarships and other incentives at the Post, District, and Department and finally to the National level where they will compete for the $30,000 first place scholarship. The Voice of Democracy theme and additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities.***

These two great programs youth scholarship programs provide over $3 million in scholarships and incentives every year.

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award

While you're visiting a school, don't miss the opportunity to mention the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teachers Award. The VFW wants to identify and recognize America's best educators who instill a sense of national pride in students. Teachers who promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism are prime candidates. It offers cash awards, commemorative plaques and all-expense paid trips to the VFW National Conventions for those worthy teachers. That honor can establish a great relationship that opens the door for all of the VFW and Auxiliary programs. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities.***

VFW Scout of the Year Program

When you visit schools and other youth oriented programs, don't forget to mention our Scouting involvement that includes our Scout of the Year Scholarship Program. The Scout of the Year program is open to Eagle Scouts, Girl Scout Gold Award, Venture Summit Award recipients and Sea Scout Quartermaster recipients. VFW's Scout of the Year offers a first place $5,000 scholarship, a second place $3,000 scholarship and a $1,000 third place scholarship each year. The VFW has a long relationship with Scouting. VFW Posts need to consider providing leaders, sponsor units, offer their facility for meetings and encourage their involvement in service projects. Posts can benefit from Scouting by having a unit do a flag retirement ceremony, help distribute Buddy Poppies, or help with clean up after events. These are just a few that would provide a benefit and generally can serve your post. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities.***

VFW "Buddy"® Poppy Program

Our oldest and perhaps most historically significant program is the VFW "Buddy"® Poppy program. It is important that you realize that although Memorial and Veterans Days are particularly important "Buddy"® Poppy events, you should have poppies at every event that involves your Post and the public. Poppies can and should be distributed year-round. I'm sure you know that we never "sell" poppies. We give them away and receive donations. If someone cannot make a donation, don't deny them a poppy. Seeing the red poppy on a lapel or dress brings honor to those we have lost and recognition to the VFW.

Additionally, section 219 of the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure, mandates that the net proceeds from the distribution of Buddy Poppies must be credited to the Post Relief Fund. Also listed in section 219 are the purposes which funds can be disbursed from the Post Relief Fund. I would encourage officers at all levels of the organization to familiarize themselves with this section. Additional information concerning the execution of the program can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Community Service, Youth Scholarships and Activities.***

VFW Recognition Programs

The purpose of the VFW Recognition Program is twofold. First and foremost, as an organization of wartime veterans and their spouses, the VFW and its Auxiliaries understand the need to recognize and honor those individuals who have performed above and beyond their peers. Of particular significance are those who, like our members and veterans, have placed the safety and welfare of others above and beyond their own. Secondly, the VFW and its Auxiliaries realize the value of these awards to the Post, District, Department and National organization.

It's important that VFW and its Auxiliary leaders, at every level, take advantage of every opportunity to honor worthy individuals and sometimes

organizations. With that in mind, the VFW has established a number of suggested awards. The following are suggested awards:

National Citation of Recognition

These citations are available to recognize Posts or individual Post chairmen who have demonstrated an exceptionally high level of service to their community. The Department Chairmen are given sole responsibility for identifying those Posts and individuals.

Public Servant National Awards (Law Enforcement, Firefighter, Emergency Services)

Each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars selects emergency medical technicians (services), law enforcement, and firefighter personnel to receive VFW Public Servant Awards. Posts are encouraged to submit a candidate for these awards to their Department Headquarters by January 1. The Department then selects a single candidate for each of the three awards and submits those to the VFW National Headquarters by February 1.

Life Saving Awards

The Safety Chairman at Posts, Districts and Departments are encouraged to regularly identify and honor individuals throughout the year in their geographic area who have saved a life. The VFW programs department provides the three different life saving citations (Regular, Line of duty and Valor), free of charge, for local presentation.

VFW Special Projects & Youth Activities

Our next level of programs is our special projects. These include Americanism, volunteer recognition, community service, awards and recognition and other youth activities. Equally important among our special projects is community service. Any activity done by a Post or Auxiliary that benefits the community falls under this broad banner and is supported by the VFW National Organization and encouraged for all Posts, Districts and Departments. Recognizing these exceptional efforts is provided in three ways - our volunteer recognition programs, Outstanding Community Service Posts Awards, and the Outstanding Post Special Project Award.

The Outstanding Community Service Post Awards are given to Posts identified by their Departments for their exceptional response to VFW community service programs. Each Department determines the actual criteria for their Posts. Posts selected for this honor are invited to send a representative to the VFW National Convention for a reception with the VFW Commander-in-Chief. There they will receive a national plaque and a recognition street sign for their community. Deadline for entries in the Outstanding Community Service Post Award is May 1st, each year.

Outstanding Post Special Project Awards are given each year to Posts that do a special project outside their normal VFW activities. Posts should submit their entries to their Department for review and endorsement before going to VFW National Headquarters. All submissions receive a certificate, Award of Merit plaque or an Award of Excellence plaque. Those receiving an Award of Excellence go on to compete for the Fred C. Hall Memorial Post Special Project Award. The Post receiving the Fred C. Hall Award receives a commemorative plaque and a $1000 community service grant. The Post Commander and his or her guest receive round-trip airfare, accommodations and per diem to attend the VFW National Convention to accept the award.

Lastly another special project is VFW Veterans in the Classroom. In recent years, many teachers have contacted VFW Posts seeking veterans to come into the classroom and share their military experiences. VFW members may also choose to contact local youth groups and schools and express their willingness to share their experiences. VFW National Headquarters has available materials to support this activity. Many veterans have found this to be an enjoyable and occasionally a therapeutic experience.

Few youth programs provide a greater benefit to a Post than involvement with a Scouting or JROTC unit. Both programs annually produce individuals with an appreciation of patriotism, civic responsibility and the likelihood of future military service. As was mentioned earlier with the ***Scout of the Year program,*** VFW Posts need to consider providing leaders, sponsor units, offer their facility for meetings and encourage their involvement in service projects. Posts can benefit from Scouting by having a unit do a flag retirement ceremony, help distribute Buddy Poppies, or help with clean up after events. In the case of JROTC the same applies. Your place may

serve as a location for the JROTC Drill team to practice and just like scouting they are an excellent resource for volunteers for Post sponsored activities.

Posts are encouraged to seek out ways in which they can benefit their community. The VFW encourages any activity that benefits the community, brings recognition to the Post and honors America's veterans and those in uniform. Every program, done by your Post, results in relationships that produce good will. This good will increases public interest in your events, often enhances your fundraising efforts and can produce new members. A Post that has been identified as a community asset through its programs will seldom have a shortage of members or lack of community support. Use your VFW Programs to establish your Post as a respected community asset. The VFW will then become the organization of choice for all veterans and will reap the rewards of public favor that cannot be purchased.

Helpful Hints for Program Execution

Each time you visit a school, conduct a patriotic event, honor a local hero, serve your community's youth or perform any kind of community service; you are creating an impression of the VFW. Hopefully, that impression is the beginning of a relationship that benefits the community and your Post. The goal of any Post should be to become known as a valuable community resource and not the local "watering hole" in the community. Posts that achieve this status rarely have problems with recruiting or fundraising.

So, how do we get young people involved? First let me say that your scholarship programs, like the "Buddy"® Poppy program, should be a part of everything you do in the community. Buddy Poppies and student entry forms for the scholarships should be present at every event where the public is involved.

We will discuss schools first, but later we will explore a variety of other opportunities to present our scholarship programs.

Contact schools, home school associations and other youth organizations early, preferably in April. This is the time of year when they begin planning for the coming fall. When you visit a school, don't go unannounced, call first to find out with whom you should meet and make an appointment.

Schools are busy places and often a secured environment. Showing up without an appointment almost ensures failure. Call, make an appointment and be on time. Conduct yourself professionally and you will be treated professionally.

Make sure you have the necessary materials to leave with the teacher, counselor, principal or administrator on everything you will discuss. Show them copies of the various brochures and identify the entry form included. If the opportunity is available, go into the classroom and present the students with the programs that directly impact them. One of the primary purposes of your visit is to leave the impression that your Post is a resource, not only for scholarships, but for veteran's history, patriotic information, and U.S. Flag etiquette. Don't forget to mention that Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are on the National Advisory List of Student Contests and Activities of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Your chances for success are increased when you work closely with your Auxiliary counterpart. Make sure that they understand and have materials for all the VFW programs. The most successful Posts are always the ones that work hand-in-hand with their Auxiliary. Like our scholarship programs, the Teacher Awards begin at the Post level. Information and entry forms are on the VFW website at www.vfw.org.

A key factor in the success of your scholarship and teacher programs is your judging process. The judging sheets are included on the training website. When selecting your judges, make every attempt to find judges from outside the VFW and its Auxiliaries. Local military recruiters, educators, media personalities, police officers, firefighters, church pastors and local civic leaders are excellent choices. If possible, make your life easier by using the same judges for all your scholarships and teacher's awards. Cultivate a good relationship with your judges by expressing your gratitude and inviting them when you honor your winners.

As mentioned earlier, when seeking students to participate don't hesitate to look beyond your schools. These same programs should be presented to the leaders and sponsors of any group that deals with young people. Look around your neighborhood for community centers, athletic teams and leagues, Scout units, churches with large youth groups, home school

associations, YMCA's and YWCA's - anywhere there are large groups of young people who may wish to participate.

In recent years, home school programs have produced a number of winning participants. Home school parents and their associations are generally patriotic, have broader latitude for selecting curricula and are always looking for projects that have value beyond the immediate lesson.

Veterans & Military Support Programs

To continue to detail the core programs, as mentioned earlier, Veterans & Military Support is part of the VFW's never-ending obligation to assist members of the active-duty military, National Guard and Reserves, as well as their families. These programs were established to keep the Veterans of Foreign Wars in the forefront of patriotism as the organization and its members find innovative way to show support for America and her armed forces.

The programs under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella consist of: Operation Uplink, Unmet Needs, Military Assistance Program (MAP) and the VFW Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship program. Through these programs, the Veterans of Foreign Wars provided assistance and guidance to our subordinate units in their efforts to support our military and their families. From hosting morale boosting events, sponsoring free phone time, providing financial assistance, to providing scholarships to veterans returning to school.

VFW Operation Uplink

Through the generosity of the VFW members and supporters, Operation Uplink has provided millions of connections since 1996. In 2006, Operation Uplink working with MWR SPAWAR internet cafes, created Free Call Days using voice over IP calls for service men and women for 24-hour periods three times a month, including all major holidays.

However, as a result of the troop drawdowns these internet cafes have reduced and consequently so have our connections and talk time. With the reduced internet connections, Operation Uplink still has the ability to provide virtual pin numbers (calling Time) for deployment ceremonies, VA hospitals and service members in countries without MWR cafes. You can contact my office to learn more on how to access these virtual pin numbers. Additional information concerning the execution of the program and the application for the virtual PINS can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Veterans & Military Support.***

VFW Unmet Needs

Unmet Needs, is financial assistance available to service members, veterans, and their families. Created in 2004 Unmet Needs assists military service members, veterans, and their families who are experiencing a financial hardship directly related to their military service. The financial assistance is in the form of a grant in an amount up to $5,000. All grants are paid directly to the "creditor" companies (such as the electric company, mortgage company, landlord, etc.) and not to the individual. The funds can be used for rent, car repairs, medical expenses, infant-care items and many other necessities. Each case is reviewed individually and acceptance determined by a committee.

Working with a Family Support Center Coordinator, Family Readiness Director or your Department Veterans & Military Support Chairman, you can help get our service members and fellow veterans the assistance they deserve. Unmet Needs, requires the service member or veteran to fill out an application. Additional information concerning the execution of the program and the application can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Veterans & Military Support.***

VFW Military Assistance Program

MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM Another troop support program under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella is the VFW Military Assistance Program. The Military Assistance Program is designed to encourage the link between the VFW and the Military community. This program promotes VFW member interaction with the local military and opens avenues for National Sponsorships and local level involvement with all branches of service. Within this program are two unique services to help foster the relationship between the Post and the local military community, the Military Assistance Program Grant process and the Adopt-A-Unit program.

The Military Assistance Grant process is intended as financial assistance for Posts, Districts, and Departments to sponsor events for active duty military units, National Guard, and Reserves. These events are most successful when local Posts interact directly with the military unit, involving the Veterans & Military Support Chairmen, National Certified Recruiters, Veterans Service Officers, and your local and department chain of command. A Military Assistance Grant application must be submitted to VFW National Headquarters a minimum of two weeks prior to the event. The application must be filled out completely, including a breakdown of the event budget and the VFW involvement with the event. Additional information concerning the execution of the program and the grant application can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Veterans & Military Support.***

Another opportunity for Posts to interact with their local military community available within the Military Assistance program is the Adopt-A-Unit program. This program was developed as a means to pledge support of the Post to the service members and families of a unit from the local military community. When a Post “adopts” a unit, you make a commitment to the service members and their families to provide moral and emotional support before, during and after deployment. Sponsoring a military unit is a great opportunity to get other community activity projects started, such as coordinating with teachers or schools to co-sponsor the unit. Additional information concerning the execution of the Adopt-A-Unit program and the

application can be found at www.vfw.org, behind the login within the ***VFW Training and Support*** hub, under ***Veterans & Military Support.***

Please remember that the objective of all Military Assistance Program initiatives is increasing the awareness of the VFW and it does not end when the troops re-deploy home. They and their families continue to need our support and assistance.

VFW Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship Program

The last program and the newest program under the Veterans & Military Support umbrella is the VFW Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship program. As mentioned earlier, Sport Clips continues to support the Free Call days through Operation Uplink and the company expanded its Help A Hero initiative to support veterans as they return home through the gift of scholarships. The VFW Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship will help service members get the education and training needed to begin the next chapter of their life. Each scholarship will provide recipients with up to $5,000 to apply toward their education at an accredited post-secondary institution, including universities, colleges, trade schools and apprenticeship and certification programs.

An important note about this program is the scholarship application is **only available on-line** at www.vfw.org and **must also be submitted online** using the form at our website. Applications submitted by U.S. mail, email and fax will not be accepted. They'll need to go to the "Assistance" page and click "College Scholarship". There will be a program overview and a helpful Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) guide, and a link to the application.