

Youth Activities Program

Gaylene Ramos

2305 E Marshall St
Turlock, CA 95380 – 4319
grmagaylene1953@sbcglobal.net
Cell: 209 – 604 – 0921

PROGRAM GOALS

Sponsoring and Working with Youth Groups Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citations – Patriotic Youth Award Patriotism through Literacy -VFW Auxiliary Lending Libraries Illustrating America Art

The youth of today are America's future leaders. And possibly our future Auxiliary or Post members. We, as an organization, need to teach them what it means to be involved, patriotic and an American. They need to learn about service, dedication, traditions, and sacrifices that are made every day by those who have served and are serving now. When working with the youth, it is important to consider their safety and their needs. You can do this by looking at the **"10 Tips for Working with Youth"**, which can be found in Malta under Resources – Youth Activities.

Sponsoring and Working with Youth Groups

- Auxiliaries can sponsor any youth group, engaging them in any one of our programs, including activities to honor our veterans or assist our service members and their families. Many youth – focused organizations and college bound seniors require various types of community service or activities to earn merits or units for credit. In our Youth Activities Program, we have something for every age group. Within our schools and the community, we can support, sponsor and work with the following:
 - The Scouts
 - Church Youth Groups
 - Boy & Girls Club
 - School Sponsored Groups – i.e. Future Farmers, ROTC.

High school students can use volunteer hours for college applications: some require letters of recommendation. Scouts can earn points toward merit badges.

How do we get the youth involved?

- Placing flags on graves – Memorial Day (This can also be reported under Americanism.)
- Helping serve meals and clean up at Veterans Dinners.
- Feeding the homeless, helping with clothing and toiletries distribution.
- Helping box up and hand out food at distribution locations for those in need.
- Organizing assembly, collection and delivery of care packages for the Troops by assisting your local Blue Star Mothers.
- Starting a Community Garden to help Seniors and families in need grow fresh vegetables and fruits.

Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans – Patriotic Youth Award

Always remember to act responsibly and respectfully around the youth. After they have helped, recognize them for a job well done by presenting them with one of our Patriotic Youth Awards. A fillable, printable version of the **Patriotic Youth Award** can be found on MALTA Member resources under Youth Activities.

The **Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citation** can also be found in MALTA Member Resources under Youth Activities. It is important that we recognize and tell the students how much we appreciate them for all their hard work and dedication.

Patriotism through Literacy

Our children learn to read at an early age, and many students have nightly reading assignments daily. Reading has many benefits such as improved grammar, writing skills, improved focus, concentration, helping children to understand as well as sharing the feelings of others while stretching the child's imagination.

This is our opportunity to help teach and educate students about patriotism, the flag, and our country. We can teach them by going online and logging in to MALTA members resources, under Youth Activities we have the Patriotism through Literacy list of books. It was updated 2025 – 2026. Patriotism through Literacy list is divided by grade levels. The list includes Creative Non – Fiction, Educational / Americana & Historical Fiction, Historical Fiction, and Non- Fiction / Memoir.

Check with your local library to see if they have the books in stock. If not, maybe your Auxiliary can do a book drive asking for books from the list. Or vote to approve on your auxiliary floor to purchase and donate books on the list to the schools or the libraries, and even the local shelters.

VFW Auxiliary Lending Library

This year's initiative is called the VFW Auxiliary Lending Library. I am excited to help promote this initiative. I have researched the Little Free Library website as there are several set up around the area that I live in. My Primary Care Doctor has one set up in his practice. Did you know that 61% of low-income families do not have access to extra funds to support purchasing books to read at home. Which can in turn lead to lower reading scores and struggling in school. This is where we come in as Auxiliaries we can help create and institute our own lending libraries in areas of our communities that we know could use them the most. These libraries can be placed anywhere (with PROPER APPROVAL, of course) : outside your Post, Community Centers, outside of churches, City Hall, the Community Swimming Pool, Youth Baseball Fields, and maybe some of your members front yard who live on corner lots or have a great location. Talk to some of the medical clinics about placing one inside.

The Little Free Library website is: www.littlefreelibrary.org It has some great information on how to get started, free plans on how to build a library or where to purchase them. One suggestion was to use recycled kitchen cabinets. Pretty cool idea. If your high school has a woodshop program, you might talk to the instructor and see if they would make it into a high school project, especially for new beginners in learning how to use tools and wood. Another idea would be to incorporate the local 4 – H groups or the Scouts. Once you have decided on how to proceed, you can incorporate books from Patriotism through Literacy list to stock up the Free Library. Get the community involved by making a book donation drive asking for books from the list. There are so many ideas on how you can expand on this project. See if you can Your Auxiliary or members if they choose to go solo can promote what you are doing for the VFW Auxiliary Lending Library using the hashtag: **#auxlendinglibrary** . The idea of the Lending Library helps to get the children off the phones, tablets, and gaming consoles. And steers them towards getting better at reading and comprehension. Maybe parents and children having access to free reading materials will help parents to read with their children at night or on the weekends. It also opens avenues for grandparents to have access to help their grandchildren with their reading skills.

Make sure to put labels inside the books with your auxiliary information on them. Maybe throw in some Buddy Poppy or Flag Etiquette materials. Looking forward to seeing how your auxiliary or even your district comes together to promote this initiative.

Reading Buddies using books from Patriotism through Literacy

Many children in school suffer from issues concerning reading and comprehension. Imagine what an impact we could have on their daily lives and self-confidence. If one person from each Auxiliary would reach out to help a child become a better reader through reading one on one or electronically, we could make a big impact on their lives. Many adults still struggle with reading due to issues growing up but continue to work to overcome them.

Benefits of Patriotism through Literacy

- By teaching student's various times in American history, it helps to expose students to different experiences that promote empathy, reflect on hardships, struggles, and overcoming obstacles.
- Spending time in the community with the students by hosting a day of reading where veterans read to the students, or the students can read to the veterans. The veterans can reflect and share stories that may be like what they are reading about. The month of November would be a good time to help promote the reading program. Check with your local schools about setting up reading days.
- Volunteer to read at your local library. Read a historical or creative non-fiction book to the students. Set up a day and time in the month of February around Presidents Day. Set up a day to read every month.
- Before visiting a VA or nursing home, see if the staff would set up an area for the children to read to the veterans or the veterans read to the children.
- Volunteer to help tutor students with their reading skills by reading stories that teach patriotism, the flag, and about our country.
- Your auxiliary can create and host a read – a – thon using R.A.P. Cards as the point system for earning small award prizes. (stickers, pins, books, etc.)
- Run a writer's workshop for aspiring teen and tween authors at your home Post.

Invite an author of historical fiction or creative nonfiction to do a book talk/signing in your area.

- **September 6, 2026**, is National Read a Book Day. Celebrate that day by hosting veterans and children to your Post. Maybe have members dress up in historical costumes, such as Uncle Sam, Betsy Ross, or President Lincoln. Maybe they have some books on hand to give out to the children.

March 2, 2027, is Dr. Seuss Day. You can volunteer to read a book at your local elementary school to the students. You could also dress in character if you are reading a book about someone special.

Illustrating America – Note "Due Date" Deadline Changes

We all love it when our children or grandchildren bring home that fridge-worthy "masterpiece" that immediately goes up on the fridge. We can help to promote and flourish their artistic talent even more by promoting the Illustrating America program which is open to any student in grades K – 8 by the **DECEMBER 15 , 2026**, deadline who is enrolled in a public, private or parochial 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 intend to become a U.S. citizen. Foreign exchange students and students aged 15 or older are ineligible. National grade division winners of previous Illustrating America contests may enter the subsequent grade division but are ineligible for the same grade division of which they are a previous National winner.

Entries will be judged on patriotic themes and technique. The contest consists of three grade divisions: K- 2, 3 – 5, and 6 – 8. The **Department** first place winner in each grade division will be forwarded to Auxiliary National Headquarters.

There are National awards for first, second and third place in each grade division. The first, second, and third place entry in each grade division will be displayed at the National Convention. Please see the student brochure and

entry form in the MALTA member resources or on the VFW Auxiliary website for more details on requirements and contest rules.

Deadlines:

Entries received by Local Auxiliary – **December 15, 2026**

January (2027) - Optional first place Illustrating America winner in each grade division from each participating sponsoring VFW Auxiliary are due to the VFW Auxiliary District for judging

January 15, 2027: Illustrating America first place winner in each grade division from each participating / sponsoring VFW Auxiliary or **optional** VFW Auxiliary District are due to the VFW Auxiliary Department Youth Activity Chairman for judging.

January 31, 2027: Illustrating America first place winners in each grade division from each VFW Auxiliary Department must be received at the VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters for judging.

Contest Rules:

- Entry must be completed during the current school year
 - Art must be two – dimensional.
 - Art must be on canvas or paper.
 - **Paper entries must be reinforced with heavy paper.**
 - Watercolor, pencil, pastel, charcoal, tempera, crayon, acrylic, pen, ink, oil, marker, acrylic, chalk, glitter or other media may be used.
 - Submit canvas entries on a stretcher frame or canvas board. Other entries, if matted, must be matted in white or reinforced with heavy paper.
 - Do **not** frame art with wood, metal, plastic, or glass.
 - Mats may be used, including mounted and floating mats.
 - **The art should be no smaller than 8”X10” but no larger than 18” x 24”, not including the mat.**
 - If the American flag is used, it does **not** need to conform to the Federal Flag Code in relation to colors, number of stars and stripes and other pertinent rules of the code.
 - **Coloring sheets, digital art and photography are not accepted.**
 - **Completed typed or printed legible entry form including parent and/or guardian signatures**
- Students’ name, age, and grade level MUST be printed on the back of the entry.**
- **Mailing entries – Please do not mail or ship in tubes, with the entry rolled up. It severely affects the entry.**

To avoid entrant disqualification

- Make sure your Auxiliary Name - Number – District- State are on the bottom section
- **December 15, 2026:** Auxiliary Youth Chairman verification signature
- **January (2027): Optional** VFW Auxiliary District Judging

January 15, 2027 – must be to Department Youth Activities Chairman by January 15, 2027.

**Please mail/ship to: Gaylene Ramos
2305 E Marshall St
Turlock, CA 95380 - 4319**

R.A.P. Cards

“Random Acts of Patriotism” (R.A.P.) Cards can be given out to any youth who are showing:

- Patriotism
- Thanking a Veteran
- Placing American flags on veteran graves
- Raising funds for a veteran's memorial and marching in patriotic holiday parades.

These are just a few but there are many more examples that can be recognized. When the child shows Random Acts of Patriotism, recognize them with the R.A.P. card and explain to them why they are receiving them. Show and tell them how proud you are of them.

The R.A.P. card template can be found online at MALTA – Member Resources – Youth Activities.

Marie Klugow Educational Grant

This Program is a California Program only for Auxiliary members and their families to continue their college education. It offers a \$3,000.00 scholarship in three (3) different areas.

- One to a graduating High School Senior
- One to a Continuing College Student
- One to a student pursuing a Nursing or Health Care career.

The deadline for Marie Klugow Educational Grant is **April 15, 2027**. Applications and information can be found on vfwauxca.org – resources.

**Please mail applications to: VFWA Department Headquarters
9136 Elk Grove Blvd, Suite 101
Elk Grove, CA 95624**

FWW Scout of the Year Program

Some of our memories growing up are being involved or seeing Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts out in the communities. I was a Brownie then onto a Girl Scout when I was younger. The VFW Organization has a strong and lasting relationship with America's scouting organizations.

The VFW Scout of the Year program recognizes members of the Boy Scouts of Scouting America and Girls Scouts of the Girl Scouts of America for their standout citizenship, patriotism and love of country.

Official form, details and rules are located at:

<https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/scout-of-the-year>

Awards for Auxiliaries

1. Most creative and/or unique VFW Auxiliary Lending Library.

- Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most creative and /or unique VFW Auxiliary Lending Library initiative.

Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources – Youth Activities. VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to their Department Youth Activities Chairman by **March 31, 2027**, for judging. The Department Youth Activities Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department- winning entry form to the National Youth Activities Chairman by **April 30, 2027**, for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Awards for Department and Department Chairman

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Youth Activities Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of the VFW Auxiliary Lending Library initiative.
2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second – Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on Page 5 and for the promotion of the Ambassador’s Program goals.

Winners will be announced and awards presented at the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Department Legacy Awards

Youth Activities Legacy Award

Deborah “Debby” Jacobs

A Legacy Award will be awarded to one Outstanding Auxiliary Chairman for best performance in the Youth Activities Program.

Marie Klugow Legacy Award

Jane Maxwell

A legacy Award will be awarded to one Outstanding Auxiliary Chairman for the Best Performance/ promotion of the Marie Klugow Scholarship.