



## **VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS ANNOUNCES 2016-2017 NATIONAL PATRIOT'S PEN ESSAY AWARD WINNERS**

Kansas City, Missouri, February 28, 2017 -- The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the VFW Auxiliary sponsor the Patriot's Pen Essay Competition. The program just finished its 22nd year and requires sixth, seventh, and eighth grade student entrants to write a 300-400 word essay on an announced patriotic theme. "The America I Believe In" was the theme for 2016-2017. All national awards totaled \$54,500. There were 54 total finalists, one from each state, the District of Columbia, Pacific Areas, Europe and Panama Canal.

Lindi Compton, an eighth grade student at Green County Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the first place \$5,000 North End Post 144, Paul A. Spera Past Commander-in-Chief National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 5813 and Auxiliary in Greensburg, Kentucky.

Madilyn Gawrych-Turner, an eighth grade student at Jonesboro Elementary School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the second place \$4,000 VFW National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 3455 and Auxiliary in Anna, Illinois.

Lauren Stemple, a seventh grade student at St. Joseph Catholic School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the third place \$3,500 VFW National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 7824 and Auxiliary in Vancouver, Washington.

Kaylee Barrett, a seventh grade student at Chattanooga Valley Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the fourth place \$2,750 Alaine Benson Memorial National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 3679 and Auxiliary in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

Kinley Wilson, an eighth grade student at Fort Gibson Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the fifth place \$2,500 Rehoboth Beach Post 7447 and Auxiliary (Dept. of Delaware) National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 474 and Auxiliary in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Keyshawn Davis, a sixth grade student at North Naples Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the sixth place \$2,000 Clyde A. Lewis Department of New York and Auxiliary National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 7721 and Auxiliary in Golden Gate, Florida.

James Brierley, a sixth grade student at Toms River Intermediate East School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the seventh place \$1,750 Dept. of New Hampshire George J. Maxfield Post 1772 and Auxiliary John A. Knapper Memorial National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 6063 in Toms River, New Jersey.

Avery Johnson, an eighth grade student at Family Community Christian School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the eighth place \$1,500 John F. Gwizdak National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 3155 in Winnsboro, Louisiana.

Sabrina Brandeis, a sixth grade student at Athenian School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the ninth place \$1,500 VFW National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 75 in Danville, California.

Sophia Crowder, a sixth grade student at Kenston Forest School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the tenth place \$1,250 VFW National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 7819 in Crewe, Virginia.

Srikar Bala, a sixth grade student at Clarksville Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$1,250 Grace Minnix Memorial National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 7472 and Auxiliary in Ellicott City, Maryland.

Jacob Fleming, a sixth grade student at Broadcreek Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$1,000 Golden Valley VFW Post 7051 (Golden Valley, Minnesota) National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 8986 and Auxiliary in Newport, North Carolina.

Rachel Coppinger, an eighth grade student at Henry James Memorial School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$1,000 VFW National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 1926 in Simsbury, Connecticut.

Daniel McCarty, an eighth grade student at Greenspun Junior High School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$1,000 Louis W. Oppenheim VFW Post #1019 National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 983 in Henderson, Nevada.

Emily Moody, an eighth grade student at Sussex Academy, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$1,000 Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Colorado National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 6984 in Milton, Delaware.

Taylor Outtrim, a seventh grade student at Kailua Intermediate School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 John V. Daniel's Jr. Post 2813 and Auxiliary (Dept. of New York) & the \$500 John E. (Jack) Bales Post 10581 (Dept. of Colorado) National Patriot's Pen Awards, for a total of \$1,000. She was sponsored by VFW Post 2875 and Auxiliary in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Emma Brault, an eighth grade student at Saint Joan of Arc School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Silver Spring Memorial Post 2562 (Dept. of Maryland) & the \$500 Department of Utah National Patriot's Pen Awards, for a total of \$1,000. She was sponsored by VFW Post 754 in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Beau Power, a seventh grade student at Athens Christian Preparatory Academy, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of Michigan & the \$500 Warren A. Tressler Memorial (Dept. of Minnesota) National Patriot's Pen Awards, for a total of \$1,000. He was sponsored by VFW Post 7103 in Athens, Texas.

Carmel Thompson, an eighth grade student at Russell Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of Nevada & the \$500 Chaplain Lyman Rollins Post 2005, Marblehead, Massachusetts National Patriot's Pen Awards, for a total of \$1,000. She was sponsored by VFW Post 4051 and Auxiliary in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Emma Popkess, a seventh grade student at Sabetha Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Charlie H. Adamson, Jr. Memorial & the \$500 Joseph A. Scerra Memorial (Dept. of Massachusetts) National Patriot's Pen Awards, for a total of \$1,000. She was sponsored by VFW Post 7285 and Auxiliary in Sabetha, Kansas.

Kathryn Codiamat, an eighth grade student at Yokota Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 James L. Keeley & the \$500 Department of Ohio National Patriot's Pen Awards, for a total of \$1,000. She was sponsored by VFW Post 9555 in Yokota AFB, Japan (Department of Pacific Areas).

Annika Sullivan, a sixth grade student at Strath Haven Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of South Dakota VFW and Auxiliary & the \$500 Department of Idaho and Auxiliary National Patriot's Pen Awards, for a total of \$1,000. She was sponsored by VFW Post 3460 and Auxiliary in Media, Pennsylvania.

Meg Harmon, an eighth grade student at Aspen Ridge Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$750 Department of Georgia and Auxiliary National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 4573 and Auxiliary in Ishpeming, Michigan.

Mallory McGinnis, a sixth grade student at Winfield Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$750 VFW Department of Washington and Auxiliary Eric G. Sandstrom Memorial National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 4768 and Auxiliary in Alum Creek, West Virginia.

Avery Blackman, an eighth grade student at Edison Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki and 2015-2016 Department Commanders National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 628 and Auxiliary in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Dalton Peterson, an eighth grade student at Encampment K-12 School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Deering Memorial Post 6859 Auxiliary Portland Maine National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 6125 in Encampment, Wyoming.

Alaina Harris, an eighth grade student at Joliet Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Deering Memorial Post 6859, Portland Maine National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 5748 and Auxiliary in Joliet, Montana.

Pascal Isaacson, an eighth grade student at Gowana Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of Arkansas, "Dewayne Fletcher Memorial" National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 1498 and Auxiliary in Clifton Park, New York.

Conner Gates, a seventh grade student at Spanish Fork Junior High School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of California National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 6395 and Auxiliary in Spanish Fork, Utah.

Nikolas Hall, an eighth grade student at Balboa Academy, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of Connecticut and Auxiliary National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 3822 in Panama City, Panama Canal.

Briana Frerking, a seventh grade student at Lafayette County C-1 Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of Missouri VFW and Auxiliary National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 4288 and Auxiliary in Corder, Missouri.

Makenna Ostrowski, a seventh grade student at Central Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of Nevada National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 1782 and Auxiliary in White Bear Lake, Minnesota.

Miles Johnson, a sixth grade student at Thomas G. Pullen School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of New Mexico and Auxiliary National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 9755 and Auxiliary in Washington, DC.

Lillian Hunt, a sixth grade student at Oliver Elementary School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of Pennsylvania 2015-16 "LDRSHIP" National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 5228 and Auxiliary in Smiths Station, Alabama.

Joseph Steppe, a seventh grade student at the Carolina Academy, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of South Carolina and Auxiliary National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 3412 and Auxiliary in Lake City, South Carolina.

Maria Burns, an eighth grade homeschooled student, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of Tennessee John Furgess National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 1440 and Auxiliary in Saint Helens, Oregon.

Mackenzie Carello, a seventh grade student at Gallagher Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Department of Wyoming and Auxiliary National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 2929 and Auxiliary in Smithfield, Rhode Island.

Baylee Baldwin, a seventh grade student at Shenandoah Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Edward S. Banas, Sr. National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 7224 in Shenandoah, Iowa.

Delaney Collier, an eighth grade student at John R. Wooden Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Frederick H. Smalley Department of New Mexico National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 1257 and Auxiliary in Martinsville, Indiana.

Brittany Dowdy, an eighth grade student at Bergman Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Gilbert N. Nelson Post 1326 and their Auxiliary, Bismarck, ND National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 10417 and Auxiliary in Lead Hill, Arkansas.

Madison Strand, an eighth grade student at St. John Lutheran School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Glenn D. Raney Memorial (Louisiana) National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 1638 and Auxiliary in Merrill, Wisconsin.

Nicholas Miller, an eighth grade student at Hopkinton Middle High School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 James R. and Pat Mueller National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 11490 in Contoocook, New Hampshire.

Adam Mssika, a sixth grade student at Vista Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Mary Margaret Romano Memorial (Dept. of Connecticut) National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 6917 and Auxiliary in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Haysannah Graham, an eighth grade student at Victory Charter School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 National President Francisca Guilford and 2015-2016 Auxiliaries National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 3465 and Auxiliary in Nampa, Idaho.

Ryan Encarnacion, an eighth grade student at Patch Middle School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Peter J. Mascetti Jr. & Department of Europe National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 10810 in Stuttgart, Germany (Department of Europe).

Riley Kaup, an eighth grade student at Plainview Public Schools, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Sanford-Springvale Memorial VFW Post 9935 National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 5330 and Auxiliary in Plainview, Nebraska.

Gillian Skehan, an eighth grade student at All Saints Catholic School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 The Robin V. Fell Memorial National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 1761 in Bangor, Maine.

Kristin Plourde, a sixth grade homeschooled student, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Mississippi and Auxiliary National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 782 and Auxiliary in Burlington, Vermont.

Andrew Drake, an eighth grade student at Chapman School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 Veterans of Foreign Wars of Ohio Charities National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 10221 and Auxiliary in Anchor Point, Alaska.

Bethany Morehead, an eighth grade homeschooled student, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 VFW And Auxiliary members of Southern Charles County Memorial Post 10081, Dept. of Maryland National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 3545 and Auxiliary in Ellendale, North Dakota.

Spencer Barber, an eighth grade student at Highland Junior High School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 VFW Department of Kansas VFW and Auxiliary National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 9399 and Auxiliary in Apache Junction, Arizona.

Ruth Anand, an eighth grade homeschooled student, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 VFW Department of New Jersey National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 3345 and Auxiliary in Strongsville, Ohio.

Sam Davis, a sixth grade student at South Forrest Attendance Center, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 VFW Department of Pacific Areas National Patriot's Pen Award. He was sponsored by VFW Post 3036 and Auxiliary in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Genevieve Robinson, a seventh grade student at St. Mary's School, has been named a winner in the 2017 National Patriot's Pen Contest and recipient of the \$500 VFW Southern Conference National Patriot's Pen Award. She was sponsored by VFW Post 12051 in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.