Americanism

This definition of “Americanism” was originated by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, United Spanish War Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the National Commanders of the American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans of the World War at a conference held in Washington, D.C., in February 1927:

“Americanism is an unfailing love of country; loyalty to its institutions and ideals; eagerness to defend it against all enemies; undivided allegiance to the flag; and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity.”

**Patriotic Instructors**

The Patriotic Instructor educates members on the proper salute to the U.S. Flag, as well as the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. He or she also takes the time to understand the VFW Auxiliary Ritual and the Federal Flag Code. He or she helps members to understand the traditions and ceremonies of the organization. The “Understanding Auxiliary Traditions” help sheet and video are available on the website.

**Flag Education**

A large part of showing Americanism and demonstrating the patriotic spirit is respecting and properly caring for the U.S. Flag. Flag etiquette covers everything from proper display of our flag to acceptable conduct around this symbol of our nation.

For more information about flag etiquette, the history of our flag and to read the U.S. Flag Code, visit: www.vfw.org/community/flag-etiquette.

**Respect for the Flag - Engaging the Community**

- **Flag Education in Schools** – Educating our youth about patriotism is an important step on the path to good citizenship. Encourage members of your Auxiliary to volunteer in schools and educate youth on the importance of respecting our flag. Volunteers can visit individual classrooms or do a presentation at a school assembly. For more resources, visit www.vfwauxiliary.org.

- **Recognition of Outstanding Community Flag Display** – When a community member or organization takes the care and time to display our “Stars and Stripes,” it reinforces patriotism to the entire community. You may recognize this display of patriotism by presenting a certificate of appreciation from your Auxiliary.

- **Flag Retirement Ceremonies** – These ceremonies honoring our flag serve as one of the most beautiful forms of respect for our country. This is the perfect way to involve the whole family of Auxiliary and VFW members. Flag retirement ceremonies can also serve as an event to involve the entire community. For more information on this and other Flag etiquette, go to www.vfw.org/community/flag-etiquette.

**Promote Patriotism – Celebrating Patriotic Holidays**

Patriotic holidays are an opportune time to involve the whole family and bring community attention to your Auxiliary. When fun family events are presented to the community, prospective new members will walk through your door. Patriotic holidays can serve as the perfect way to show that your Auxiliary considers patriotism, and veterans and their families, a top priority. For more information about patriotic days and ways to celebrate, visit: www.vfwauxiliary.org.
Loyalty Day – May 1
On May 1, 1930, 10,000 VFW members staged a rally at New York’s Union Square to promote patriotism. Through a resolution adopted in 1949, May 1 evolved into Loyalty Day.

Armed Forces Day – Third Saturday in May
A day to pay tribute to the men and women currently serving in our nation’s armed forces.

Memorial Day – May 30 (Traditional)
Patriotism calls for all citizens to be reminded of the deaths of their fellow countrymen during wartime. By honoring the nation’s war dead, we preserve their memory and thus their service and sacrifice.

Flag Day – June 14
This day celebrates the official symbol for the United States: our “Stars and Stripes.” Flag Day was first recognized by Congress on June 14, 1777.

Independence Day – July 4
On this day in 1776, our forefathers formed a new nation by adopting the Declaration of Independence.

Patriot Day – September 11
This day is to perpetuate the memory of those who perished in the attack on America that occurred on this date in 2001.

POW/MIA Recognition Day
POW/MIA Recognition Day honors the commitments and the sacrifices made by our nation’s prisoners of war and those who are still missing in action. National POW/MIA Recognition Day, traditionally on the third Friday in September, is one of the six days specified by law on which the black POW/MIA flag shall be flown over federal facilities and cemeteries, post offices and military installations.

Gold Star Mother’s & Family’s Day
On the last Sunday in September, Americans are encouraged to display the flag and hold appropriate ceremonies as a public expression of our nation’s gratitude and respect for our Gold Star Mothers and Families.

Veterans Day – November 11
This is an opportunity to publicly commemorate the contributions of living veterans.

Pearl Harbor Day – December 7
This day is in remembrance of the same date in 1941 that Japanese bombers staged a surprise attack on U.S. military and naval forces in Hawaii.

POW/MIA Recognition
Auxiliary members are passionate about bringing attention to former Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action by holding ceremonies to both educate their communities and honor these special veterans. One way to honor these veterans and educate youth and the community on this subject is by having a Missing Man Table Ceremony. The practice provides a visual demonstration of the significance of POW/MIA Recognition Day. You are encouraged to share this ceremony with youth groups partnering with the Auxiliary.

Find a sample of the ceremony wording and table setup at www.vfwauxiliary.org.

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award
The VFW annually recognizes the nation’s top classroom elementary, junior high and high school teachers who teach citizenship education topics regularly and promote America’s history and traditions effectively. Teachers who are prime candidates for this award promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism.

Examples of Activities from Award-Winning Teachers
• Field trips to city hall
• Community volunteer projects
• Hosting veterans to discuss their military experiences
• Special projects that foster the development of democratic values and beliefs

How the Contest Works
Based on the nominees submitted, VFW Posts and Auxiliaries will recognize one outstanding teacher in grades K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Posts then submit their winning names to their District-level judging. From there, the selected winners are forwarded to the Department level. Once they are judged on a Department level, the winners are passed along to VFW National Headquarters for the national contest.

For more information, instructions for nomination and nomination forms, visit: www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education.
PROGRAM GOALS:

Flag Education
Promote Patriotism
POW/MIA Recognition
Smart/Maher National Citizenship Education Teacher Award

To meet the Americanism Ambassador and National Conference Chairmen, and to see the awards, go to Page 22.
Americanism Ambassador

DIANA RUDEEN
Americanism Ambassador
4835 Arlington Street
Loves Park, IL
61111-5814

What is the No. 1 way to connect with the community through your program?

We can connect with so many people in our community by inviting families and other organizations to our patriotic events. School children and their families, scout troops, Family Readiness Groups (FRG), National Guard Units and church groups are a good place to begin. Consider hosting a Patriotic Family Fun Day. It is a great way to bring families and children together to help spread patriotism throughout our communities. It is also a way to share with others the great work we do in this organization on a daily basis. Bringing the community together to spread patriotism is what it is all about. We can also attract others to join our organization when they see firsthand our enthusiasm and commitment to our veterans who gave us the freedoms we enjoy every day.

What are you most passionate about this program and why?

I am most passionate about keeping patriotism alive in the minds and hearts of the American people. I am proud to be an American and love this great country. My heart swells with pride every time I see Old Glory being raised in the sky. I proudly place my hand over my heart each time I say the Pledge of Allegiance and sing the National Anthem. Patriotism should be an everyday event that begins right at home.

Sadly, in today’s society, the true meaning of patriotism has diminished. I march in parades and when the flag of our great nation passes by, hats being removed and hand salutes are more absent as time goes by. I cringe when I turn on the television to sporting events and the same thing occurs. It now takes a tragic event and or a national holiday to bring patriotism back to the forefront of our great nation. If I could make one wish come true it would be for every American to keep patriotism alive on a daily basis in their homes, hearts and in the community.

One group of individuals that I am very passionate about is Gold Star Mothers and Families. Their children and family members gave the supreme sacrifice when they were in war time and lost their lives in the line of duty. A blue star was placed in the window when they went off to war and a gold star was placed directly over the blue star when they were killed. The gold star is a symbol of honor and duty rather than being a symbol of mourning. I encourage everyone to honor these families on Gold Star Mothers & Family’s Day and every day as we display patriotism throughout this great nation.

If you could talk to every Auxiliary member at one time, what would you tell them about your program?

We need to get back to the basics and spread patriotism. Sharing events is easy to do these days with social media like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. We also need to remember radio, television and newspapers to help get the word out. More importantly we need to make sure we are professional and represent the VFW Auxiliary in a positive light.

Another important part about being in public is dressing in patriotic colors and wearing a big smile. Wearing our uniform look fully dressed with our pins and brass makes us stand out in the crowd.

We perform acts of patriotism on a daily basis. We as an organization need to share and educate families and their children about the true meaning of Americanism and patriotism. Inviting friends and families to patriotic events that we hold in our communities is the key to success. I would love to see everyone incorporate a Patriotic Family Fun Day into their programs this year. This would be an excellent way to spread the true meaning of Americanism and patriotism. Look at how many people we could reach. This event can bring families closer together and learn the true meaning of patriotism.
What experience do you have in this program?

I was raised in a home filled with patriotism and I carried it on in the lives of my four children. My children grew up in the VFW and learned the true meaning of patriotism on a daily basis. Veterans of every war shared with them their love and respect for our flag and our great nation. As a family we worked right alongside of our veterans even instilling more patriotism into our lives. From shipping packages to our soldiers overseas to visiting veterans in nursing homes and hospitals these experiences kept Americanism alive on a daily basis. Not a day goes by that I do not display random acts of patriotism.

What are you most excited about for the 2017-2018 program year?

I feel the most exciting thing about this year will be educating and teaching families and the younger generation the true meaning of patriotism. This begins with getting the word out by all of our Auxiliary members across this great nation. There are hundreds of ways to put Americanism back in the forefront of the American people starting with families and their children. I am so excited to see how many of you will hold a Patriotic Family Fun Day this year. This one event could hold the key to making this program a huge success this year and in years to follow. What a better way to bring families and children together with helping them spread patriotism back into the hearts and minds of the American people.

Conference Chairmen

BIG TEN STATES
Penny Hurt
734 E 9th Street
Davenport, IA
52803-5612

EASTERN STATES
Terry McGarr
56 Third Street
Glens Falls, NY
12801-4231

SOUTHERN STATES
Monica Hogue
3904 Larkwood Drive
Del City, OK
73115-2828

WESTERN STATES
Chrissy Harlan
2151 W Felicia Place
Tucson, AZ
85741-3101
Americanism Awards

AWARDS FOR DEPARTMENTS AND DEPARTMENT CHAIRMEN:

1. Citation to each Department Chairman for participation in this program.
2. *Catch the Dream Gift Certificate* to one Department Chairman in each Program Division for the best promotion of the Family Freedom Festival.
3. Outstanding Performance Award in each Program Division based on criteria listed on Page 1 and for the promotion of the Program Goals on Page 4.

AWARD FOR NATIONAL CHAIRMEN:

*Catch the Dream for Our Veterans Keepsake* to each National Chairman for participation in this program.

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<tr>
<th>Signed ____________________________</th>
<th>Department Chairman</th>
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