

## **Youth Activities Promotion #1 July 2024**

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2024-2025 National Youth Activities Ambassador

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Hear ye Hear ye, Read All About It,

I am Dominique C. Garcia from the Department of New Mexico; I will be your National Youth Activities Ambassador for the 2024-2025 Program Year. I am very honored to fill this position and work with all the Department Youth Activities Chairmen; it's going to be a great and fun year!

Little bit about me: I have been an Auxiliary member for 10 years, I have my eligibility through my grandfather who is a Vietnam veteran. My Auxiliary Post Home is George O'Breece VFW Post 401 located in Albuquerque, New Mexico. My family is very involved with the VFW Auxiliary; my mom, aunts, sister and I were all in the Junior Girls when it was still around. My whole life has practically revolved around the VFW and Auxiliary. I have been highly involved since I joined. I followed in my mother's footsteps as Department President under Jane Reape in 2022-2023. I am the youngest Department President in my state. Fun fact, my first Department Chairman was Youth Activities. I will be the third generation of VFW Auxiliary National Ambassadors in my family.

I have held many positions within the Auxiliary. I am very proud of being Auxiliary Treasurer for four years, that is one position that always scared me, but I've been told I did a great job at it. I have held many Program Chairmanships throughout the years and enjoy educating the Auxiliaries on the Program goals.

Outside of the Auxiliary I am a pharmacy technician at Presbyterian Rust Medical Center, inpatient pharmacy, I do anything from restocking med rooms, making IVs, compounding medications, working with the OR staff for medication needs and assisting pharmacists with daily operations. I have a 2-year-old pure breed weenie dog named Paisley Rae, she was born on Veterans Day, so it was a perfect match for me and her. I enjoy shopping, traveling, going to the movies, playing TopGolf, trying new foods, playing with my puppy, spending time with family and friends and reading.

Speaking about reading, one of this year's Youth Activity goals is Youth Reading to our Veterans and Veterans Reading to Youth. Reading is a big part of growing up and learning; it is one way to teach our youth about patriotism and our country. In MALTA Member Resources, Youth Activities, we have a Patriotism through Literacy list that is divided into grade levels-pick some books from there to help you get started. You can always check at your local library or even online for e-books, you may be able to donate some Patriotic books to your local library but be sure to check with your librarian first.

How do you get youth and veterans to read to each other? How about hosting a day of reading? Veterans and children can take turns reading to each other, provide food and make it a fun day for everyone. Some possible dates to include into that could be September 6, 2024, which is National Read a Book Day and Read Across America kicks off on March 2, 2025. Dr. Seuss Day, some schools or libraries may host a Dr. Seuss day event. Speak to teachers or librarians to see if it is possible to have veterans go in and read to the youth.

Youth are the future of our organization; we should get them involved now and recruit them when they turn 16. When we work with youth, we aren't just educating them about our organization, but about America, patriotism, veterans and volunteering. We can work with the scouts, church youth groups and JROTC to name a few-there are many groups in the schools and our community that we can support and work with. Many high school students can use volunteer hours for their college applications.

With the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Home coming up, youth could help make birthday cards. Who doesn't enjoy a homemade birthday card? "Buddy"® Poppy drives are always great to have the children help with. Get creative on how to involve our youth, but always remember to act responsibly and respectfully among them; they are looking up to you. Always be sure to recognize them for a job well done.

R.A.P Cards (Random Acts of Patriotism), these are one way to reward the children whether it's showing a random act of patriotism, doing a good job helping at an event or reading to a veteran. You could create a read-a-thon, every book or minute of reading can be worth so many cards. Create a point system with the cards and then have a reward system for the cards that can be turned in for books, a soda, a prize, candy or movie tickets. Get creative with them: the templates for the cards are on MALTA Member Resources, Youth Activities.

The Illustrating America youth art contest is for students in grades K-8. Ask the students how they picture America then have them draw it. It's always great to see what they come up with. There are three grade divisions- K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. Deadlines to keep in mind-entries at the local level are due by March 31, entries are due to Department by April 15 and entries are due to National by May 5. Be sure to check MALTA for the entry forms and contest rules.

Be sure to check MALTA for any additional resources you may need. If you have any questions, want to share any ideas or projects you are doing please feel free to reach out to me.

I am very excited for this year! Let's get out there and work with our youth to help them become the next leaders in our great organization.