



VFWCA ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF ANNUAL AWARDS CONTESTS

*Winners named for Patriot's Pen, Teacher of the Year, and Voice of Democracy
\$70,000 in Scholarships*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SACRAMENTO, CA – The Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of California is excited to announce the winners of the Patriot's Pen essay contest, the Teacher of the Year, and the Voice of Democracy; statewide contests that have been held annually since 1947.

Conner Machado of Springville, CA was named the first-place winner for the 2021-2022 Patriot's Pen essay contest. Conner was sponsored by Post 9499 in District 6. Mussein Hirani from Lake Forest, CA, sponsored by Post 6024 in District 2, was awarded second place. William Wang from Pleasanton, CA, sponsored by Post 6298 in District 10, received third place.

The Patriot's Pen essay contest is an annual scholarship competition for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students to express their views on a patriotic theme. Each year, students from across the nation submit an essay based on the annual topic. The 2021-2022 theme was "How Can I Be a Good American?" This year, almost 2000 California students entered the contest, and over \$30,000 of prize money was awarded.

The 2021-2022 California State Teacher of the Year was awarded to Jessica Del Angel. Jessica has taught Life Science for the past 17 years at El Cerrito Middle School in Corona, CA. Her colleagues and students say that she is a devoted teacher who delivers her curriculum with integrity, good citizenship, and patriotism.

The annual Teacher of the Year award is given by the VFW to recognize the nation's top certified/licensed educators who teach and promote America's history, traditions, and citizenship. Jessica hosts the "El Cerrito Middle School Salutes Our Veterans" event annually in which students connect with local veterans to learn about their experiences. Jessica has also implemented the Medal of Honor Character Development Program to teach courage, commitment, integrity, sacrifice, citizenship, and patriotism to her students.

The first-place winner of the statewide Voice of Democracy scholarship program was Rebecca Joseph, a junior at Las Lomas High School in Walnut Creek, CA. Rebecca was sponsored by Post 8063 in District 10. Rebecca will continue on to compete at the national level for the \$30,000 T. C. Selman Memorial Scholarship Award.

The Voice of Democracy program requires the entrants to write and record a three-to-five-minute speech on a patriotic theme. This year's theme was "America: Where Do We Go from Here?" Winners were selected at multiple levels, before making their way to the state finals. VFWCA Posts and Auxiliaries presented almost \$40,000 in scholarships and awards this year.

The VFW Department of California is proud to honor the winners and finalists from throughout California and thanks everyone who participated in this year's contests.

For more information about the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of California, please visit vfwca.org.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is a nonprofit veterans' service organization composed of combat veterans and those who currently serve on active duty or in the Guard and Reserves. Founded in 1899 and chartered by Congress in 1936, the VFW is the nation's largest organization of war veterans and is one of its oldest veterans' organizations. With 2.1 million members located in 7,700 VFW Posts worldwide, the VFW and its Auxiliaries are dedicated to "honor the dead by helping the living" through veterans service, legislative initiatives, youth scholarships, Buddy Poppy and national military service programs. Annually, the VFW and its Auxiliaries contribute more than 11 million hours of community service to the nation.

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