

VFW Crowns 2023 National Youth Scholarship Winners

Tennessee high school sophomore takes home first place \$35,000 scholarship

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WASHINGTON – Tonight, during the 76th annual Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Parade of Winners ceremony, the organization proudly presented more than \$171,000 in scholarships and awards as it named the national winners of its 2023 Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen youth scholarship competitions.

Sponsored by Twisted X, the Parade of Winners event featured the 53 national VFW Department (state) winners, along with Twisted X CEO and president, Prasad Reddy.

VFW National Commander Tim Borland was joined by VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape to present this year’s national Voice of Democracy first place winner, Scotland Stewart, with the top \$35,000 T.C. Selman Memorial Scholarship. Stewart, a sophomore at Franklin County High School in Winchester, Tennessee, was sponsored by VFW Post 1893 in Estill Springs, Tennessee. [Watch as he delivered his winning essay](#) during this evening’s ceremony on this year’s theme, “Why is the Veteran Important?”

Second place winner Siri Corson, a junior at Fillmore Central High School in Harmony, Minnesota, sponsored by VFW Post 6893 and its Auxiliary in Preston, Minnesota, was awarded the \$21,000 Charles Kuralt Memorial Scholarship. Gina Wierzbowski, a senior at Mystic Valley Regional Charter School in Malden, Massachusetts, sponsored by VFW Post 620 located in Stoneham, Massachusetts, was named the third place winner and awarded the \$15,000 VFW Scholarship. All other state winners received at least a \$1,000 college scholarship. [See the complete list of 2023 Voice of Democracy national winners.](#)

Also featured during tonight’s awards ceremony was the 2023 Patriot’s Pen first place winner, Leighton Peters. Sponsored by VFW Post 2204 and its Auxiliary in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, Peters was awarded the top Patriot’s Pen prize of \$5,000. [Watch as she delivered her winning essay](#) during this evening’s ceremony on this year’s theme, “My Pledge to Our

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Veterans.”

The Patriot’s Pen second place winner, Nolan Green, sponsored by VFW Post 8731 in Monticello, Minnesota, will receive a \$4,000 award, while third place winner Makayla Cole, sponsored by VFW Post 5675 and its Auxiliary in Odessa, Missouri, will receive a \$3,500 award. [See the complete list of 2023 Patriot’s Pen national winners.](#)

Learn more about the VFW Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen programs [here](#).