

## 2026 Patriot's Pen First Place Winner

### "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?"

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A cold, crisp morning. I stepped off the quarterdeck, ready to begin the day. As the morning colors started, I brought my hand to a salute. Every month, through the United States League Cadet Program, I find opportunities to show my patriotism—by respecting our nation's symbols, helping my community, and constantly striving to become the best version of myself.

First, I honor the **symbols of our nation**. Every school morning, we pledge allegiance to the flag over the loudspeakers, a simple act that reminds me of the values it represents. The fifty stars stand for the unity of our states, while the thirteen stripes honor the courage of the original colonies. These symbols are more than fabric and color—they represent freedom, sacrifice, and the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Learning about American history has deepened my appreciation for these ideals. By respecting our flag, our monuments, and our founding principles, I express my pride and gratitude for being an American.

Second, I show patriotism by **helping others and serving my community**. I have volunteered at events such as the Army's 250th Birthday celebration, where I had the chance to work alongside veterans and hear their inspiring stories. Serving those who have served us taught me that patriotism is not only about words—it's about action. Even small acts matter. At school, I help classmates who struggle with their work, and my math teacher once emailed my parents to recognize my helpfulness. Supporting others, whether through community events or small daily actions, strengthens the nation as a whole.

Finally, I express patriotism by **challenging myself to grow stronger—physically, mentally, and morally**. When each of us strives to be our best, we make our country stronger in every way—militarily, politically, economically, and diplomatically. As Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War*, "To fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's will without fighting." This reminds me that discipline, integrity, and determination are the true foundations of strength.

In conclusion, I show my love for America by honoring our nation's symbols and ideals, serving my community, and always working to improve myself. Patriotism is not just a feeling—it is a way of living. Each day, I will continue to "do a good turn daily" in service of my country, because I believe that **knowledge, kindness, and effort are what keep America strong**.