

VFW Names Top National Youth Scholarship Winners

Minnesota high school junior takes home first place \$30,000 scholarship

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Tonight, during the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) first-ever virtual Parade of Winners, the organization proudly presented more than \$208,000 in scholarships and awards as it named the national winners of its 2021 Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen youth scholarship competitions.

Due to the pandemic and the cancellation of the VFW's annual legislative conference, the VFW instead chose to virtually host its awards show, sponsored by [Twisted X](#) and [Dell](#), live on Facebook. Together with VFW Auxiliary President Sandi Onstwedder and Twisted X President Prasad Reddy, VFW National Commander Hal Roesch traveled to Rochester, Minnesota, to surprise this year's national Voice of Democracy winner, Erin Grace Stoeckig, and present her with the \$30,000 first place scholarship. Stoeckig was sponsored by Rochester, Minnesota, VFW Post 1215 and its Auxiliary. [Watch as she delivered her winning essay](#) on this year's theme, "Is This the Country the Founders Envisioned?"

Second place winner Faith Hannah Lea, a senior sponsored by VFW Post 8696 and its Auxiliary in Palm Coast, Florida, was awarded the \$16,000 Charles Kuralt Memorial Scholarship, while Matthew Blair, a junior sponsored by VFW Post 8214 in Manchester, New Hampshire, was named the third place winner and awarded the \$10,000 VFW Scholarship. All other state winners received no less than a \$1,000 college scholarship. [See the complete list of 2021 Voice of Democracy national winners.](#)

"Despite the challenges the pandemic presented, we weren't going to let it stop us from celebrating this momentous occasion," said VFW National Commander Hal Roesch. "Tonight the VFW was proud to present our nation's best and brightest students with more than \$208,000 in scholarship and awards, making a grand total of nearly \$2.7 million presented at the national, state and local levels of our competitions. Our country is in good hands with future leaders like Ms. Stoeckig."

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In addition to taking home a college scholarship, the VFW surprised all of the Voice of Democracy state winners when it announced they would also receive a new laptop, courtesy of event sponsor Dell.

Also featured during tonight's virtual awards ceremony was the 2021 Patriot's Pen first place winner, Wyatt Perkins. Sponsored by VFW Post 4221 in Lake Portland, North Dakota, Perkins was awarded the top Patriot's Pen award of \$5,000 and [delivered his winning essay](#).

The Patriot's Pen second place winner, Bennett Gordon, sponsored by VFW Auxiliary Post 2730 in Sturgis, South Dakota, will receive a \$4,000 award, while third place winner Sydnie Morgan, sponsored by VFW Post 12140 and its Auxiliary in Tualatin, Oregon, will receive a \$3,500 award. [See the complete list of 2021 Patriot's Pen national winners](#).

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