3 Teachers Selected for National Awards by the VFW

Mar 24, 2014

Each year for the past 15 years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW) has recognized three exceptional teachers for their outstanding commitment to teach Americanism and patriotism to their students.

The Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award recipients are selected from entries submitted by local VFW Posts in the U.S. and overseas. The entries detail a local teacher's act of promoting civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism in the classroom.

There are three categories of competition: elementary school (K-5), middle school (6-8) and high school (9-12). During the competition more than $272,000 in awards were presented to more than 1,400 teachers at various levels in the VFW.

Shirley Harmon Helton, a fifth-grade teacher at Fairlawn Elementary School in Fort Pierce, Fla., was named the winner at the elementary school level. At the middle school level, Jeff Gephart, a seventh- and eighth-grade history teacher at Holloman Middle School on Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, N.M., was named the winner. Tom Clark, a history teacher at Lake Central High School in St. John, Ind., was selected at the high school level.

Each teacher receives a $1,000 award for their professional development and another $1,000 for their school. In addition, all three teachers receive an all-expense-paid trip to St. Louis, Mo., where the awards will be presented during the 2014 VFW National Convention, July 19-23.

Kevin Jones, director of VFW Programs, commented, "Next to parents, teachers hold the key to raising up young civic-minded patriots who will perpetuate the values that have made this nation great."

Photo Caption: From left to right: Shirley Harmon Helton, Jeff Gephart, Tom Clark

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