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PATRIOT'S PEN NATIONAL AWARDS INCREASED

KANSAS CITY, MO, September 11, 2006 – The VFW's Patriot's Pen National Essay competition was recently enhanced by the addition of two new awards and a major increase in an existing award. The national essay program for students in grades 6-8 now offers a total of forty (40) U.S. Savings Bonds totaling \$89,500.

At the 107th VFW National Convention in Reno, Nevada, the Sanford-Springdale Memorial VFW Post #9935 established a \$1,000 award. In addition, the existing 3rd place North End Post 144, Paul A. Spera Past Commander-in-Chief Award becomes the Patriot's Pen 1st place \$10,000 award with the presentation of an additional donation of \$40,500.

Over the past 12 months, the Patriot's Pen Program has seen four additional \$1,000 national awards including the James R. & Pat Mueller Award, the Robin V. Fell Memorial Award and the Deering Memorial Post 6859, Ladies Auxiliary Portland, Maine Award and the Department of South Carolina Palmetto State Award.

The addition of new awards provides a substantial increase in the interest in the Patriot's Pen Essay Competition. One of the VFW's fastest growing programs, Patriot's Pen began in 1995 as the VFW Youth Essay Contest. Since its inception, the program has averaged 10-15% growth in student participation nearly every year. More than 100,000 students participated in last year's program, receiving more than \$964,000 at the Post, District, Department and National levels.

All national Patriot's Pen awards are established in perpetuity, investing the money donated for the award and using the annual interest to purchase the U.S. Saving Bond for the award. The minimum new award is a \$1,000 U.S. Savings Bond. The \$10,000 donation is invested at an average of 5% and then provides \$500 annually to purchase a single \$1,000 bond. Awards currently honor Posts, Departments, past commanders, and a variety of individuals. The name of the award is determined by the donor(s). Anyone wanting more information about establishing a Patriot's Pen national award should contact the VFW Programs Office at 816-968-1117 or via e-mail at VFWPrograms@vfw.org.

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