

VFW 2022 Voice of Democracy Winners Attend Spirit of America Youth Leadership Program at Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge

'Being able to provide ... students with an up-close and personal experience with their civil liberties in action helps to fortify them as America's next great generation of leaders'

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VALLEY FORGE, Penn., – Over 30 VFW 2022 Voice of Democracy state winners traveled to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, to attend the [Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge's Spirit of America Youth Leadership program](#).

For years, the two organizations have been connected through the VFW's Voice of Democracy program, a patriotic audio essay competition that, in 2022, had nearly 25,000 high school students competing for the \$30,000 national grand prize scholarship.

Every year the top 53 VFW Department winners from the 50 U.S. states, and from overseas areas in Europe and the Pacific, come to Freedoms Foundation each June to participate in a Spirit of America Youth Leadership program - a transformative four-day residential program that engages high school students from across the country with the first principles of freedom. Their experience is filled with inspiring and educational activities, including a mock congressional debate, free enterprise challenge, workshops, and historical site visits while developing their leadership skills and identifying their future contributions to society.

"The opportunity to meet, debate, and collaborate with such a diverse group of exceptional peers from across the United States and world was an incredible experience," said VFW Department winner and Spirit of America student Abigail Marsters. "I will treasure this opportunity for the rest of my life."

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“For more than 75 years, the VFW has remained committed to connecting America’s youth with the importance of patriotism and freedom, so teaming up with the Freedoms Foundation was a natural choice,” said VFW Programs Director Lynn Rolf III. “Being able to provide our nation’s best and brightest high school students with an up-close and personal experience with their civil liberties in action helps to fortify them as America’s next great generation of leaders.”

“The students participating in the Voice of Democracy program represent the finest of America’s rising generation,” said David Harmer, CEO of Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge. “We’re honored to work with the Veterans of Foreign Wars in equipping these future leaders with a deep understanding of both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Here in Valley Forge, crucible of the American Revolution, they are not merely informed, but transformed into the thoughtful, informed patriots we need to safeguard our freedoms.”

Background Information on Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge (FFVF)

FFVF is a non-profit organization that educates students on American rights and responsibilities, honor acts of civic virtue, and challenge all to serve a cause greater than themselves. FFVF provides more than 40,000 hours of educational instruction to students from across the county on America and our democratic system of government. It was established in 1949, to create and build an understanding of the spirit and philosophy of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. FFVF aims to cultivate among all Americans—but particularly the rising generation—appreciation for the history, ideals, and continuing relevance of these charters of freedom. In addition, FFVF provides immersive, intensive, experiential educational programs for students, and college-accredited, graduate-level, professional-development courses for teachers.

Background Information on the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is the nation's largest and oldest major war veterans organization. Founded in 1899, the congressionally chartered VFW is comprised entirely of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. With more than 1.5 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in nearly 6,000 Posts worldwide, the nonprofit veterans service organization is proud to proclaim “NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS” than the VFW, which is dedicated to veterans’ service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. For more information, or to join, visit our website at vfw.org.