

VFW Awards National Youth Scholarship Winners

Nebraska high school senior takes home first place and a \$30,000 scholarship

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WASHINGTON – The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) tonight proudly presented more than \$200,000 in scholarships and awards as it named the national winners of its 2020 Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen youth scholarship competitions. The awards were presented during the Parade of Winners ceremony, sponsored by Twisted X, at the VFW’s annual Legislative Conference held in Washington, D.C.



(Top) VFW National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz and VFW Auxiliary President Peggy Haake present Voice of Democracy first place winner Shruthi Kumar (center) with her \$30,000 award; (right) VFW National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz and VFW Auxiliary President Peggy Haake present Patriot’s Pen

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first place winner Ruby Howe (center) with her \$5,000 award.

Shruthi Kumar, a high school senior from Marian High School in Omaha, Nebraska, was named the first place winner and presented with the \$30,000 T.C. Selman Memorial Scholarship award during this evening's ceremony where she [delivered her winning essay](#) on this year's theme, "What Makes America Great." Kumar was sponsored by VFW Post 1581 in Omaha, Nebraska.

Second place winner Rachel Perry, a senior sponsored by VFW Post 7239 and its Auxiliary in Acushnet, Massachusetts, was awarded the \$16,000 Charles Kuralt Memorial Scholarship, while Dallin Christensen, a junior sponsored by VFW Post 1481 and its Auxiliary in Ogden, Utah, 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 2020 Voice of Democracy national winners.](#)

"The more than \$200,000 awarded tonight makes a grand total of \$3 million presented at the national, state and local levels of our competitions, and I know will help ensure the doors of opportunity are opened wide for this talented group of young people," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. "Even after 73 years, the VFW remains committed to ensuring America's youth develop a strong sense of patriotism and civic duty to become the great leaders our future will need, because who knows, in the room tonight could be a future Supreme Court justice, senator, or even our future president of the United States of America."

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 Dell. Aron Waisman, Dell senior manager of business development, and Chris Pringle, Dell strategic account manager, were on hand to make the announcement.

Also present at last night's ceremony was the 2020 Patriot's Pen first place winner, Ruby Howe, from Rochester Hills, Michigan. Sponsored by VFW Post 334 and its Auxiliary in Lake Orion, Michigan, Howe received the all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., where she accepted a \$5,000 award and [delivered her winning essay](#).

The Patriot's Pen second place winner, Casseus Rhodes, sponsored by VFW Post 7968 in Apache Junction, Arizona, will receive a \$4,000 award, while third place winner Rei Borges, sponsored by VFW Post 11367 in Mary Esther, Florida, will receive a \$3,500 award. [See the complete list of 2020 Patriot's Pen national winners.](#)

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