



## Michigan Department VFW Auxiliary Americanism – June/July 2025

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**National Theme: *From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free***

**Department Theme: *We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All***

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all the Auxiliary and District Chairmen for accepting this chairmanship and all you do for our veterans! My name is Diana Ward, and I have been given the honor of being your Department Americanism Chairman by our President, Debbie Scheetz. I am a member of Auxiliary 3243 in the 10<sup>th</sup> District. I earned my eligibility through my father, James Ward, a retired Navy veteran. During his 20 years, he served in the Korean and Viet Nam Wars and had many other locations of service as well as serving as a United States Air Marshall. I am also proud to say that my mother, Viola Ward, was a Navy veteran. As you can imagine, I grew up with a strong sense of patriotism and American pride. I truly believe in our National theme "From Sea to Shining Sea Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free" and our Department theme "We Don't Know Them All, But We Owe Them All." Our National Ambassador this year is Diana Russell-Milton from the Department of California. I am looking forward to sharing this journey with you this year. I would love to meet each one of you so please take a moment to introduce yourself to me when you see me at any Department or individual function. Please feel free to reach out to me any time with questions, ideas or concerns – my contact information is given below.

OK, let's dive right in. In successive bulletins, they won't be so long since I won't review the entire program but rather, I will be focusing on aspects of the program. The Guide Sheet is available on the Department website. Start a notebook for your Guide Sheet and Bulletins so you have them handy. As you can see, there are three parts to the Guide Sheet – National awards, Department awards and the Achievements. It's like a building block – complete the achievements to earn the Department awards and the National award. At a glance, it may seem like a lot, but you do what you can. Remember each program is the work of the Auxiliary as a whole. The Chairman is the leader – you guide and teach the members what the chairmanship is about and keep track of everything the Auxiliary does. Some Auxiliaries may just want to focus on one or two things while others will do a little of everything. Every Auxiliary has the chance of earning one of the Department awards, but the beauty of the Best Overall award is for the Auxiliaries that encompass the whole program.

The program goals set forth by our National Ambassador are flag education, promoting #AuxiliaryPatriotism, POW/MIA recognition, and Star Family recognition. Our job as the Americanism Chairman is to teach our members and communities what these goals are all about. Many years ago, the VFW along with several other veteran-based organizations defined "Americanism" and that definition is printed in the front cover of our National Bylaws – take a look and teach that meaning.

We are also going to put some focus on back to the basics with our Auxiliaries. Each Auxiliary has a Patriotic Instructor. Our Bylaws on page 54 of the Ritual charges this member with the duties "to teach patriotism and good citizenship to the people of our country; to assist in the floor work ceremonies and perform such other duties as the Ritual may require." This can be as

simple as making sure the flags are arranged on the floor properly at the meetings and to promote reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and singing the National Anthem at our meetings. We are going to work on teaching the traditions of the Auxiliary and educating the members with things like the #AuxiliaryPatriotism. More to come on this.

We are going to promote Americanism and patriotism by getting flags into the hands of kids and adults alike. During the year you will be distributing flags and reporting how many you distribute. It doesn't matter what the size of the flag is, just the number given out. Reach out to local businesses and get them a flag to display. Give certificates to those businesses who already display the American flag regularly.

Education is going to be a big focus. We want to teach flag etiquette and The U.S. Flag Code – I'm working on getting that on the website. This is all about helping our members and community know how to display the flag correctly. How to properly retire or destroy a flag when it becomes tattered or worn. We really want to try to reach into the schools and partner with them to teach kids – this is where patriotism begins. If you can't present education in the local schools, have events at your Post home for kids on a weekend. Talking about education, we are going to work with our Posts to submit candidates for Teacher of the Year. We rely on the schools and teachers to help us build a foundation of patriotism within the children of our land so it can be carried into the next generation.

We are going to work on POW/MIA recognition – having ceremonies or, if you have a veteran in your community honor them and what they went through in service to our country. Reminding people that we still have so many service men and women who are unaccounted for.

Star family recognition is another part of this program. Many people know the phrase "Gold Star", but a lot of them don't know all the other star families. Build a foundation of education and encourage people to honor those who have sacrificed a loved one through their service.

Finally, we are going to educate on the holidays and patriotic observances we know and don't know about. It's all about American History and how we have come through the ages. Remembering the past builds a strong patriotic foundation for the future. We have Flag Day and 4<sup>th</sup> of July coming up. These are good times to begin distributing flags and teaching proper etiquette. Parades are a big one! Most people don't know that they are supposed to stand and salute the flag as it goes by. Proper etiquette is that the first flag of the parade usually carried by the VFW or some other Honor Guard is to stand and salute the flag. Maybe you can put an article in your local paper to educate people to stand and salute this first flag. Something that my Auxiliary members and I do during our parades is say "thank you for standing and saluting for the flag". This has two benefits – it gives positive reinforcement for those who do it and encourages those that don't. When we say this, those that stood smile and wave and then you will suddenly see many more people jump up and salute. Positive praise does wonders.

### **HOLIDAYS FOR JUNE AND JULY**

**June 6 – D-Day** - The original World War II D-Day occurred on June 6, 1944. On this historic day Allied troops invaded the beaches of Normandy, France. It is the largest amphibious assault in world history. This massive, bloody battle was the turning point of the war in the European theater. On this day, 156,000 troops from the United States, Great Britain, and Canada stormed five beaches. American troops landed on Omaha and Utah beaches; British troops

landed on Gold and Sword Beach; and Canadian forces landed on Juno Beach. 4,000 Allied troops died on these beaches on D-Day, and 2,000 of them were American.

**June 14 – US Army 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday** – Congress adopted the “American Continental Army” on June 14, 1775. Congress intended to have ten companies serve as a light infantry force for the Boston siege. At the same time, it symbolically extended military participation beyond New England by allocating 6 companies to Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. Each company would have a captain, 3 lieutenants, 4 sergeants, 4 corporals, a drummer (or horn player), and 68 privates.

**June 14 – Flag Day** - A day for all Americans to celebrate and show respect for Old Glory, its designers, and its makers. Our flag represents our independence and our unity as a nation “one nation, under God, indivisible”. The Stars and Stripes has a proud and glorious history. It was at the lead of every battle fought by Americans. Many people have died protecting it. It even stands proudly on the surface of the moon. The U.S. flag is also referred to as The Red, White, and Blue. First and foremost, our glorious flag stands for freedom. It represents what it means to be an American. So, raise it up the flagpole today and every day with pride!

In 1775, the first American flag, called the Continental colors, was created for our fledgling country. But, it looked too like the British flag. So, on June 14, 1777, the Second Continental Congress passed a resolution that “the flag of the United States be 13 stripes, alternate red and white,” and that “the union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation. The stars represented the original 13 states. As other states joined the union, additional stars were added. Today there are 50 stars representing the 50 states. It wasn’t until 1916, that President Woodrow Wilson issued an official decree making June 14th Flag Day. However, some say the original day occurred in Wisconsin in 1885, and that Bernard J. Cigrand, a schoolteacher, began the practice of celebrating the flag’s birthday. He assigned his class to write essays about its significance.

**June 19 – Juneteenth** - Juneteenth celebrates and symbolizes the end of slavery in the United States. President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862. It was not until June 19, 1865, that all slaves were finally freed. That concluding event was when General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas with his troops and issued Order Number 3 which finally freed the last of the slaves. The formal end of slavery was marked by the passing of the 13th amendment of the constitution. In 2021, Juneteenth became a Federal holiday. The formal name is *Juneteenth National Independence Day*. It is sometimes referred to as *Emancipation Day* or *Freedom Day*.

**June 20 – National Bald Eagle Day** – Also known as *American Bald Eagle Day*, we celebrate the national bird of the United States of America. As our national bird, it symbolizes freedom, strength, honesty, wisdom, and power. On this day in 1782, U.S. Congress declared the Bald Eagle our national bird and it was added to the official seal of the United States. The bald eagle is portrayed holding 13 arrows in its left talon, symbolizing the original 13 colonies. In its right talon, it holds an olive branch, a symbol of peace.

**June 27 – National PTSD Awareness Day** - Strives to bring awareness to the public and to educate and eliminate the stigma associated with PTSD. Many of those with PTSD don't seek treatment. Sometimes they simply fear the labels attached to PTSD. However, with support and understanding, we may all better understand the signs and provide better care.

**July 2 – Made in the USA Day** - In 1989, Joel Joseph of the Made in the USA Foundation created *Made in the USA Day* also known as Made in America Day. The objective of this holiday is to appeal to the patriotism in each of us and increase the sales of products made in America. As a result, it increases American jobs, so the holiday is a call to all American consumers to buy American goods and products.

**July 4 – Independence Day** – Also known as 4<sup>th</sup> of July is the birthday of our nation. Thomas Jefferson is the leading author of the Declaration of Independence. He led a committee that crafted the declaration between June 11-28, 1776. Jefferson and other representatives from the thirteen colonies voted and approved of it on July 4, 1776. The document declared freedom for the 13 colonies from British rule. It currently resides in the Exhibition Hall of the National Archive in Washington, D.C. The Declaration of Independence was not signed by all representatives until August 1776. To make it official, John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress signed it.

**July 20 – Moon Day** - Commemorates the day man first walked on the lunar surface in 1969. The Apollo Space program, begun by President John F. Kennedy, was created to put the first man on the moon. Apollo 11 fulfilled that dream, carrying astronauts Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Edwin Aldrin, Jr. On July 16, 1969, Apollo 11 was launched from Cape Kennedy Space Center atop a huge Saturn V rocket. On July 20, 1969, the Lunar Module, nicknamed the “Eagle”, touched down on the surface of the moon at Tranquility Base. Upon landing, Apollo 11 Commander Neil Armstrong reported “The Eagle Has Landed”. A few hours later, Neil Armstrong, stepped off the Eagle’s ladder, placed one foot upon the moon’s surface, and proclaimed: “That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind”. The Artemis space program will bring man back to the moon. It will include the first woman to step foot on our lunar neighbor.

**July 27 – Korean War Veterans Armistice Day** - It was at 10 a.m. on July 27, 1953, that two years and 17 days of negotiations finally ended three years of brutal fighting on the Korean Peninsula. Over 23,600 US servicemen died during the Korean battles.

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