

VFW HONORS STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND PUBLIC SERVANTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

MADEIRA BEACH, Fla. – May 2, 2017 – Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 4256, honored local students, teachers and public servants during their annual award ceremony held Tuesday evening at the post's Madeira Beach facility.

The ceremony was led by Post Commander Ron Mills and was attended by students, teachers, first responders, Pinellas County Sheriff's deputies, Madeira Beach's Mayor Maggi Black and several city commissioners.

As in years prior, Madeira Beach Middle School students participated in the *Patriot Pen Essay Contest*, sponsored annually by VFW posts throughout the country. The Madeira Beach VFW awarded 1st Place to Nia S. Rowe, who read her essay, "The America I Believe In," to the assembly. Jolie Thellab and Castle Bond took 2nd and 3rd places, respectively. Ms. Rowe's essay will be entered with others from around the country in the national competition, the winner of which is awarded \$5,000 and a trip to Washington, D.C.

Madeira Beach Middle School teacher Stephen Ross was recognized for his efforts in encouraging students to participate in the contest.

Admiral Farragut Academy High School students Zachary Fine, Stephanie Bailey and Kahe Barnett were the post's *Voice of Democracy Audio Essay Contest* winners this year, placing first through third place, respectively. Ms. Bailey presented her essay, "My Responsibility to America" at the ceremony. State essay winners have an opportunity to win a \$30,000 scholarship at the national level.

Mills noted that academy teacher Mark Panuthos was instrumental in convincing students to participate in this year's essay contest.

The post honored David W. Bostick as this year's *Smart/Maher VFW National Citizen Education Teacher Award* recipient. A second grade teacher at Madeira Beach Fundamental School, Mr. Bostick is a retired U.S. Coast Guard First Class Petty Officer. Commander Mills introduced the teacher stating, "Using his GI Bill, Petty Officer Bostick earned *Magna Cum Laude* distinction in a Bachelor of Science Degree for Elementary Education at Florida Southern College and has been teaching in Pinellas County schools for over 20 years." "He employs a unique approach in class to help with literacy and fluency techniques as he uses guitar and leads the class in sing-a-longs ranging from folk tales to current hits," Mills said.

The post also recognized its 2016-2017 Public Servant Award recipients. Pinellas County Sheriff Deputy Christopher Kohmann was awarded *The Law Enforcement Public Servant Award*. Driver Engineer/Paramedic Ryan Roberts was recognized as *The EMT Public Service Award* recipient. *The Firefighter Public Servant Award* was awarded to Firefighter/Paramedic C. Jamie McGaughey. Mills remarked that these individuals were exemplary public servants and role models in their respective departments.

The post's *Special Volunteer Award* went to VFW volunteer Barb Bates for her hours of effort in repairing and repainting the post facility. Commander Mills stated, "There are always numerous people that deserve recognition every year, which makes it very difficult to pick someone for this award." Mills continued, "Barb is even here tonight volunteering with the Awards Ceremony."

Of this annual veteran sponsored event, Mills stated, "It is always an honor for us to meet and recognize the young students as well as the exceptional public servants here in Madeira Beach."



PHOTO: Madeira Beach Fundamental School teacher David Bostick receives the Teacher Award from VFW 4256 Post Commander Ron Mills

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