

VFW RECOGNIZES TOP STUDENTS, TEACHERS, FIRST RESPONDERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

MADEIRA BEACH, Fla. – March 5, 2018 – Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 4256, honored local students, teachers and public servants during their annual award ceremony held Monday evening at the post's Madeira Beach facility.

The ceremony was led by Vietnam War veteran and 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 officials, including Commissioners Nancy Oakley and John Douthirt, and City Manager Jonathan Evans.

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 Ashley Percifield, who read her essay to the assembly. Alexis Browett and Anna Lense took 2nd and 3rd places, respectively. Ms. Percifield's essay will be entered with others from around the country in the national competition, the winner of which is awarded \$5,000 and an all-expense paid 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 and made brief remarks to the attendees.

High School students Joseph Ambrefe, Lauryn-Maggie Smith and Josie Davis-Brown were the post's *Voice of Democracy Audio Essay Contest* winners this year, placing first through third place, respectively. Mr. Ambrefe read his essay, which focused on today's technology. State essay winners have an opportunity to win a \$30,000 scholarship at the national level.

Noteworthy in this year's VFW's essay contest was the aforementioned Ms. Smith, a senior at Saint Petersburg High School. Commander Mills noted that to submit her essay, "Ms. Smith drove to three VFW posts in the Saint Petersburg area before the last finally accepted and forwarded it to the Madeira Beach VFW." Her essay, titled *American History: Our Hope for the Future*, "... truly personifies this student," said Vietnam War veteran John Kieffer, the post's Adjutant. In her essay, Ms. Smith foreseeably wrote, "Hope gives us goals and the motivation to keep going in rough waters."

The post honored Madeira Beach Fundamental School teacher Richard Kennedy as the *Smart/Maher VFW National Citizen Education Teacher Award* recipient. Prior to his career as a teacher, Kennedy served in the U.S. Army as an Intelligence Analyst. During his combat tour in Afghanistan, he obtained a Liberal Arts Associates Degree and, upon his return from the war zone, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in middle grades math and science from the University of South Florida. Commander Mills remarked that Mr. Kennedy "... likes to utilize a variety of instructional methods making his classes relevant by translating complex math problems to actual life experiences."

The post also recognized its 2017-2018 Public Servant Award recipients. Pinellas County Sheriff Deputy Shannon Roxby was awarded *The Law Enforcement Public Servant Award*; Paramedic Jamie McGaughey was recognized as *The EMT Public Service Award* recipient

and Firefighter/Paramedic John Sleppy was named recipient of *The Firefighter Public Servant Award*. Symbolically, both McGaughey and Sleppy were dutifully responding to a call and arrived after the ceremony had concluded.

The post's *Special Volunteer Award* went to VFW Auxiliary member JP Decker for "... her great help and dedication overseeing the post's canteen games and raffle events," said Mills.

Following the ceremony, participants enjoyed a fried chicken dinner and ice cream, which was prepared for and donated to the ceremony by Big John's Kitchen, the post's new in-house food contractor.



Front, l-r: Ashley Percifield, Ana Lense, Alexis Browett, JP Decker, Shannon Roxby, Ron Mills; Back, l-r: Richard Kennedy, Josiah Davis-Brown, Lauryn-Maggie Smith, Joseph Ambrefe

CONTACT INFORMATION

Press release by:
JOHN KIEFFER

VFW Post 4256 Post Adjutant & Communications Officer
Email: johnkieffer1234@aol.com
Phone: 813-919-9161

VFW Post 4256 information:

RON MILLS, VFW Post 4256 Commander: HVFW1@tampabay.rr.com
12901 Gulf Blvd., Madeira Beach, FL 33708
Phone: 727-397-3767
Website: www.TheVFW4256.org