

2023-2024 Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship  
EducationTeacher Award Entry

Nominee: Deborah Velto

VFW Post 1034

As the Youth Scholarship co-chairman at my local VFW 1034 in Brattleboro for the past four years, I have had the pleasure to work with Ms. Velto when she took over as the Social Studies Teacher at Kurn Hattin Homes for Children when long time teacher, Richard Long retired.

Despite the challenges of COVID and taking on this new position, Ms. Velto has flourished, utilizing her skills and her role to teach her Kurn Hattin students about veterans and their experiences before during and after their military service. Ms. Velto has embraced and continued the tradition of Kurn Hattin's participation in the VFW Patriot's Pen Essay Scholarship program has worked with over twenty-five students to help them fine tune their essays for submission thus far.

Ms. Velto has also been a key organizer in Kurn Hattin's annual Veterans Day Program teaching our youth patriotism and to honor Veterans each year and has ensured that our VFW and Auxiliary are invited and has selected students read their Patriots Pen submissions.

For all her hard work to teach and model our youth about veterans and their role in ensuring the democracy of our country, I nominate Deborah Velto to be recognized by the VFW for her excellence as a teacher.



Karen Campbell

2023-2024 Smart / Maher VFW National  
Citizenship Education Teacher Award Nomination

Nominee: Deborah Velto      VFW Post 1034

Deborah Velto received her Bachelors of Arts in English from Siena College and went on to earn a MS in Education from Sage Graduate School in Troy, NY. Deborah worked in several NY public schools before moving to the Navajo Reservation where she worked as a high school English teacher for three years. She also spent several years as a middle school Special Educator at a small rural Vermont school. When her children were young, she spent time teaching at a Waldorf inspired program for homeschoolers, and soon became actively involved in her local homeschooling community while giving workshops and homeschooling her own children. Later, she worked as the K-8 director at Oak Meadow, a distance learning program for homeschool students. Currently, she works as a middle school Civics and Social Studies teacher at Kurn Hattin Homes. She also runs her own interest based after school programs in enrichment and civic engagement, and acts as an educational consultant through her business River Branch Academics in Saxtons River, VT. She believes strongly in helping students find their voice and feel empowered to make positive changes in the world around them. Deborah lives in Southern Vermont with her husband, two children, and three dogs. Her family loves to be active and spends a lot of time outdoors exploring the world around them.

(<https://kurnhattin.org/>)

# Three Kurn Hattin Homes' Students Win Patriot's Pen Essay Contest

April 17, 2023



**Pictured (l-r) are: Tegan Kilburn, grade 8, who won 1st Place, and 2nd Place at the District Level; Trace Kline, grade 8, who won 2nd Place; and Oluwambamise Precious Adedji, grade 8, who won 3rd Place.**

Richard Campbell, State Commander from the Brattleboro VFW–Post 1034, presented awards to three Kurn Hattin Homes’ students who had submitted essays for the 2023 Patriot’s Pen Veteran Essay Contest. The theme was, “My Pledge to the Veterans.” Tegan Kilburn, who won 1<sup>st</sup> Place and 2<sup>nd</sup> Place at the District Level, wrote, “I pledge to make sure that nobody forgets our Veterans. They have taken huge risks to ensure tranquility and everyone’s safety. We wouldn’t live in as much peace as we live in today if it wasn’t for our Veterans. I will continue to learn about the amazing things they did just so people today could live in peace. I pledge to make sure others know that without our heroic Veterans we wouldn’t live in peace like I do now.”

## Visit

Kurn Hattin Homes For Children  
708 Kurn Hattin Road  
Westminster VT 05158  
Call (802) 722-3336 (tel:18027223336)  
or send a message (</contact-us/>)

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# Kurn Hattin Homes Honors Veterans

November 17, 2022

Kurn Hattin Homes held its annual Veterans Day celebration program and luncheon on November 11, 2022. The hour long presentation included the Presentation of Colors, A Call to Colors, Moment of Silence, Taps, Pledge of Allegiance, Star Spangled Banner, Welcome from Executive Director, Stephen Harrison; Introductory remarks from Social Studies Teacher & Curriculum Coordinator, Deborah Velto; selections from students' Patriot Pen Essay contest entries, candle lighting to the reading of In Flanders Field, Veterans Tribute video, address from Veteran, Phillip Sherrick, Jr., class of 1981; Kurn Hattin Concert Band selections, Retirement of Colors, and Retreat.

Mrs. Velto said, "In Social Studies, we learned about veterans this year through listening to their stories. We learned that veterans come from different backgrounds, have different reasons for serving, and have a variety of different jobs and experiences during their service. Many of these experiences are positive and others might be painful. Some served during wartime others during peacetime. Some veterans have remained in active duty most of their lives, while others served for a few years. We watched many videos of veterans telling their stories, interviewed some local veterans, and read stories about the experiences veterans have had

before and after service.

We learn a lot from the stories.” She went on to share that Kurn Hattin Homes’ middle school students participate in the annual patriot’s Pen essay contest through the VFW. This year’s theme was, “My Pledge to the Veterans.” The students reflected on the different military experiences, and some of the issues facing veterans today.

Alumnus, Phillip Sherrick, Jr. who has served in all four branches of the military, spoke of his experiences. An article he wrote titled, “Human Connection, Character, and Honor Matter” was recently published in the local media.

Following the moving ceremony, guests were treated to a delicious lunch and a tour of the school classrooms and a residential cottage.

Special thanks to Deborah Velto, Social Studies Teacher & Curriculum Coordinator; Jen Leonard, Acting Music Director; Ginger Cook, Chris Goding, & Ben Weiner, Music Helpers; Mary Beth Culver, Weekday Residential Director; Maintenance & IT Departments, and all of the Kurn Hattin children & staff

If you are a Westminister, Vermont area veteran and would like to attend next year’s program, please contact Heather at (802) 721-6916 (tel:(802) 721-6916) or [hlonge@kurnhattin.org](mailto:hlonge@kurnhattin.org)

## Visit