



**Congratulations to SHA 8th grader, Catie Noggle, who won the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) District 11 Patriot's Pen competition. District 11 consists of 20-plus local posts including Clare, Shepherd, Midland, Weidman, Standish, Gladwin, and other towns in our area. Catie won \$250 at the district level and now moves on to the state competition at the end of this month. Her essay is included below.**

---

## **Why I Honor the American Flag**

“Standing as I do, with my hand upon this staff, and under the folds of the American flag, I ask you to stand by me as long as I stand by it.” -Abraham Lincoln

The American flag has long been a symbol of all we stand for, from the time it was sewn together by Betsy Ross in the midst of our nation's revolution, to when we salute it today anywhere from our schools to our sports games. In the joys of our victories or in the pain of our losses, our flag is one of our country's most important treasures. But, what makes it so special?

When the flag was made, our nation was in the midst of our revolution, our very birth from England. We were becoming an independent country after many long years of fighting and finding our morals. As our country grew and developed, so did our morals. The America you know now believes that every life is equal, and that men and women, black, white, whatever your story and whatever your heritage, you have a chance to make a life for yourself in America.

We have fought many wars for these morals, and countless lives have been lost for the safety and freedom and equality Americans often take for granted. When you look up at that red, white, and blue flag, you know that because of all the wars we have fought, and all the sacrifices our armed forces have made, all based around the idea of what we stand for, you realize that in America, equality is who we are.

In conclusion, I honor the American flag with all my heart because of what it symbolizes, and what our brave men and women in the armed forces have given to make this country a safe and equal place. I realize that our country has imperfections, but I know when I look at that flag, our country can work to be a better place and become the land of the free and the home of the brave we sing about.