



VETERANS FOR PEACE

North Central Florida, Chapter 14
vfppeacepoetrycontest@gmail.com

“If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.” – Mohandas Gandhi

Dear Educator,

The North Central Florida chapter of Veterans for Peace announces its 16th ANNUAL PEACE POETRY CONTEST for Alachua County, where all students, grades K-12, are encouraged to submit one original poem focusing on the idea of peace, social justice or environmental justice.

Veterans for Peace members believe that peace-making and hope for an end to war, violence and injustice begins in our community, our homes and our schools. Through the Peace Poetry Contest, we hope to stimulate discussion and critical thinking on tough subjects like war, racism, injustice, hate, environmental harm and inequality. By addressing these issues, we can begin to make them right. That is why we invite you and your students to participate in the contest this year; a peaceful possibility lies in the younger generations of today who will be leading, transforming and inspiring the world of tomorrow.

In years past, as many as 400 poems were submitted. We received many inspired entries. A panel of local authors and poets judges poems based on creativity, content and use of language. The winners will be published in the 2026 Peace Poetry Book and asked to recite their poem at the public Peace Poetry Reading on May 9 in Gainesville. Winners will also receive gift certificates from a local bookstore.

If your students want to submit poems to this year's Peace Poetry Contest, the deadline for submissions is April 3, 2026. Poems can be submitted at any time from now till then via email to vfppeacepoetrycontest@gmail.com. Submissions must include the poet's name, grade level and school, and two preferred methods of contact for the parent/guardian and/or teacher (e-mails and/or phone numbers). We need this information to notify the winners efficiently and reliably. Teachers can serve as direct contact for the winning students, helping us to notify the parents, but this is not required. All students will be notified of the results, even if their poem does not place.

For more information, please email vfppeacepoetrycontest@gmail.com or call Sherry Steiner at (352) 214-6787. To see a copy of the 2025 Peace Poetry Book, visit <http://www.vfgainesville.org/>. You can also view the 2025 Peace Poetry Reading/celebration video at this website.

We are looking forward to receiving poems from your students. Please share this information with any colleagues that we have not included who might be interested in participating. Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Sherry Steiner and Jessica Newman
North Central Florida Veterans for Peace