

VFW PATRIOT'S PEN 2016-2017

Lindi Compton

Kentucky

First place \$5,000 national Patriot's Pen winner

*The America I Believe In*

I like to envision America as a jigsaw puzzle. Every piece represents each and every American and their individuality. Alone, one puzzle piece may not look like much, but as each piece unites together, the big picture is formed. No two pieces are alike, or play the same role as another. America is a lot like this puzzle. The America I believe in is united.

When you sit down to put together a puzzle, it can sometimes be a little overwhelming. So many pieces, all different and unique. In America, when we face a problem, like someone protesting for equal rights, our diverse nation does not make it an easy fix. When putting together a puzzle, the pieces don't just immediately fall into place. It takes time and patience to start seeing the bigger picture. America has gone through difficult times such as slavery, women's rights, and the Civil War. These were not our proudest moments as Americans, but throughout all this chaos, we united together and fixed the problems at hand.

"There are lots of Americans, but only one America" -Val Saintsbury. 319 million people in America and we're growing more and more each day. Out of those 319 million, 21.8 million are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. Our veterans are like the box our puzzle comes in. They are the ones that hold all the pieces together in one place and protect them from outside elements. Without the box, we would lose puzzle pieces. As in America, without our veterans, we would lose many things we take for granted every day. Veterans are the main reason our country is united today.

"Our strength as a nation comes in our unity." - Ben Carson. America is working each and every day to be the best it can be. Even though we fail sometimes, we can always pick the pieces back up and place them where they need to be. The pieces will not always fit where we would like them to, and sometimes pieces will go missing. But that's the great thing about America. No matter what happens, no matter how many times we fail, we will always reunite together to form the bigger picture. That's the America I believe in.