2026 Air Force

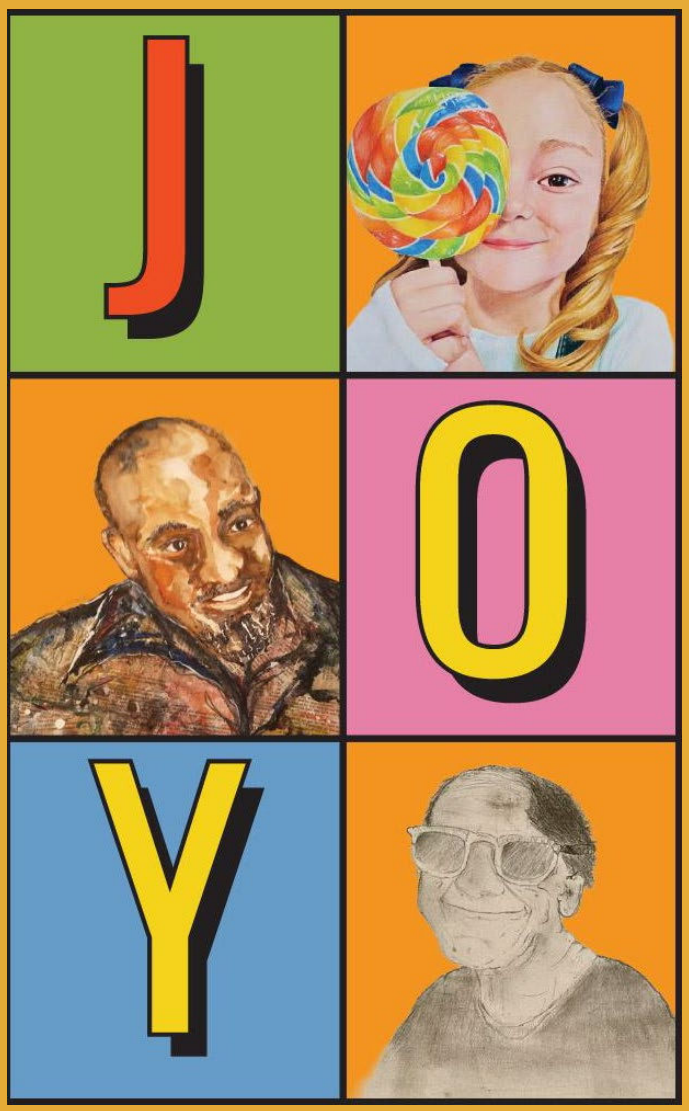
ART & PHOTO CONTEST





1 October – 31 October 2026

Official Rules & Eligibility Requirements



AIR FORCE
ARTS & CRAFTS

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Entry into the **Air Force Art & Photo Contest** indicates agreement by the entrant, to all Air Force Art & Photo Contest Official Rules and Eligibility Requirements.

Theme

The 2026 theme is…

JOY UNFILTERED

In a world of curated feeds and perfected smiles, we often present a polished version of happiness. But what does joy look like in its purest form?

"Joy Unfiltered" is a challenge to capture this essential emotion in its most authentic state: raw, spontaneous, and beautifully real. We are seeking moments that are not performed for a camera but are *lived*. It's the uncontainable laugh, the quiet tear of relief, the messy aftermath of a joyful celebration, or the serene look of contentment when no one is watching.

This theme invites you to look past the surface and explore what joy truly is. It isn't always neat, and it isn't always a perfect smile. It can be found in the chaotic, quiet, imperfect, and profoundly human moments that connect us all.

FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER:

Think like a photojournalist of the heart. Capture the candid. The un-posed. Look for the "in-between" moments: the shared glance across a room, the victory dance when a personal goal is met, the quiet pride on a loved one's face. Your lens is a window into a genuine experience. We want to see honesty in a moment, the beauty in an unguarded expression.

FOR THE ARTIST:

Translate an internal feeling into an external form. How would you paint the *sensation* of relief? What colors and textures represent the sound of a child's laughter? Use your medium to deconstruct joy and show us its essence. This could be through abstract expressionism that conveys a burst of bliss, a symbolic still life representing sources of contentment, or a portrait that captures a soul's true, unfiltered light.

Ultimately, "Joy Unfiltered" is a call to forget perfection. We challenge you to find and create images that resonate with truth, vulnerability, and the undeniable energy of a moment honestly felt. Show us what joy looks like when it's free.

Eligibility Requirements

- Authorized patrons of Air Force Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Programs are eligible to participate in the Air Force Art & Photo Contest (IAW DAFI 34-101, *Department of the Air Force Morales, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Programs and Use Eligibility*).
- Entrants in the Adult Category must be at least 18 years old at the time of entry.
- Entrants in the Youth Categories must meet the following age requirements.
    - Photo Contest
        - Youth Pre-Teen (ages 9-12)
        - Youth Teen (ages 13-17)
    - Art Contest
        - Youth Child (ages 6-8)
        - Youth Pre-Teen (ages 9-12)
        - Youth Teen (ages 13-17)
- A legal parent or guardian must submit entries on behalf of authorized Youth Category participants.
- Force Support Squadron (FSS) Commanders, civilian leaders, and FSS marketing personnel may enter the contest, but are **NOT** eligible for prizes.
- Participants must meet all eligibility requirements determined in the Official Rules.
- Prizes will be awarded to eligible participants.
- Failure to meet eligibility or submission requirements will render the submission ineligible.
- Participants are limited to submitting entries within their respective age categories. Submitting the same artwork or photograph in multiple categories is prohibited and will result in disqualification.

Categories

Art (Main Category)

- **2D (sub-category)**
  - Age Groups
    - Adult (ages 18+)
    - Youth Child (ages 6-8)
    - Youth Pre-Teen (ages 9-12)
    - Youth Teen (ages 13-17)
- **3D (sub-category)**
  - Age Group
    - Adult (ages 18+)
    - Youth Child (ages 6-8)
    - Youth Pre-Teen (ages 9-12)
    - Youth Teen (ages 13-17)

Photography (Main Category)

- Age Groups
  - Adult (ages 18+)
  - Youth Pre-Teen (ages 9-12)
  - Youth Teen (ages 13-17)

Description of Categories & Age Groups

2D

Two-dimensional art is a drawing, sketch, or painting. Accepted media include oil, watercolor, acrylic, pastel, mixed media, gouache, egg tempura, pen and ink, charcoal, colored pencil, sketch board, markers, and metal point.

3D

Three-dimensional art mediums are sculptures, ceramics, pottery, clay, glass, metals, jewelry, wood, fiber, and textile.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The practice of capturing images by exposing light-sensitive film or a digital sensor directly to the scene being photographed. It involves composing a single image in-camera, without significant post-processing or manipulation. Traditional photography aims to depict a scene or subject as faithfully as possible, relying on natural lighting and minimal alterations.

Adult

For all adult participants, regardless of experience level, who are either honing their skill or are an emerging artist. All are encouraged to submit their work in any approved media. **Any participant that is found to have been paid for any artwork or photography will not be eligible for prizes.** Adults may meet any of the following criteria:

- Self-taught and have primarily learned their medium through personal study or informal practice
- Participants involved in local or community art groups or classes
- Formal training from an art school, university, or art-based education program.
- Teaching, mentoring, or formally guiding others in the arts.

Prizes

Winners will be notified via email, no later than 11 December 2026. Winners must respond via email within ***five calendar days*** of notification. If no response is received, an alternate winner will be chosen.

Prizes will be awarded to the top three (3) winners in each sub-category.

- First place: $500 Amazon Gift Card
- Second place: $400 Amazon Gift Card
- Third place: $300 Amazon Gift Card

Winners will receive an Amazon Gift Card presented by their installation Point of Contact (POC). If the winner is under the age of 18, a legal parent or guardian must be present with the youth to accept the prize.

Winners **must** possess a DoD ID card and have access to the installation in their submission.

NOTE: If a winner is selected and has since PCS'd or moved from the installation in their submission, the winner must notify the 2026 Air Force Art & Photo Contest POC via email.

Acceptance of the prize grants the Air Force the right to use the winning submission in its entirety for any publicity, advertising, or promotional purposes without compensation.

All winners must comply with all terms and conditions set forth in the Official Rules. Winning is contingent upon fulfilling all such requirements.

NO ENTRANT MAY WIN MORE THAN ONE PRIZE.

Contest Period

Submissions will be accepted beginning 1 October 2026 CST and end 31 October 2026 at 1200 CST.

Entrants are responsible for determining the corresponding time zone in their respective geographical areas. **No exceptions will be made if a participant misses a deadline.**

How to Enter

No purchase is necessary to enter or win.

1. Visit https://forcesupport.awardsplatform.com from 1 October 2026 at 1200 CST to 31 October 2026 at 1200 CST.
2. Register for an account or sign in.
    a. We recommend using a non-government email as they often block awards platform messages.
3. Click 'Start entry' button
4. Under the 'Contest & Category' field, select '2026 Art & Photo Contest'.
5. Complete all remaining fields under each tab.
6. Click 'Submit entry' at the bottom of the page once your submission is complete.
    a. You will receive a confirmation email after you submit your entry.

Air Force Services will not accept entries via any other means.

Submission Requirements

By submitting an entry in the contest, regardless of country of entry, each entrant represents and warrants that his or her photograph(s) conform to these Official Rules and meet the following criteria.

1. Submissions must be the original work of the entrant
2. Submitted artwork and photographs must have been created within the timeframe of 1 January 2026 to 31 October 2026.
3. Artwork and photograph(s) must convey the theme "Joy Unfiltered"
4. Submitted artwork and photographs may not have won a previous contest.
5. Artwork and photograph(s) must be submitted as high-quality JPG/JPEG or PNG files and must be 300 dpi when saved to ensure clear, detailed images for judging.
6. Participants may submit up to two (2) entries in each category. However, only one prize will be awarded per entrant.
    a. i.e. Jane submits one 2D art piece, one 3D art piece, and two photographs in her respective category.
7. Artwork and photographs may only be submitted in an entrant's respective age group.
8. All artwork and photographs must have a title. 'Untitled' work will not be accepted.
9. Each submission must have an accompanying caption that tells the story of the image and how it was made.
10. Submission must not…

a. Be obscene or libelous
b. Contain defamatory or derogatory remarks
c. Use inappropriate language or slang
d. Violate any rights of any third party

Any submission violating these guidelines will be disqualified.

11. Artwork and photography must not be subject to any third-party agreements which may require Air Force Services Center (AFSVC) to pay any sum of money to any person or entity because of its use or exploitation of the photographs or rights therein.
12. AFSVC reserves the right to request proof that the artwork and photograph(s) submitted is an original work. Non-compliance with this rule will result in disqualification of the entry.
13. The entrant will hold AFSVC harmless for unauthorized use of artwork and photographs by third parties.
14. Submissions may be used without restriction by AFSVC, including without limitation, rights to use images in digital, social, broadcast, and printed media for the purposes of advertising, publicity and promotion. AFSVC reserves the right to modify images.
15. Generative AI tools are not permitted. All elements with the artwork and photograph must be created by the artist, with reliance on stock images, pre-made templates, or third-party models.
16. All eligible who are Department of War (DoW) employees or service members must provide a valid military email address (e.g. @mail.mil, @spaceforce.mil, or @us.af.mil) when submitting their entry. Dependents who do not have a military email address must use their sponsor's valid email address to confirm eligibility.

Artwork Requirements

17. Any references used in creating artwork, including photographs, must be taken by the artist or must be used with written permission from the original source.
18. The artwork must be solely created by the entrant, without utilizing stock images, pre-made templates, or other third-party materials.
19. The artwork must not be based on published materials, other artists' work, or any form of previously copyrighted content.

Photography Requirements

20. Traditional photography: The practice of capturing images by exposing light-sensitive film or a digital sensor directly to the scene being photographed. It aims to depict a scene or subject as faithfully as possible, with minimal post-processing or manipulation.
21. Photographs may not bear watermarks, logos, signatures, or markings of any kind.

22. Photographs may be cropped.
23. Photographs may only be minimally processed.
24. Photographs must not contain content, element or material that violates a third party's intellectual property rights, including, but not limited to copyrights, trademarks, patents, trade secrets, logos, contract and licensing rights, rights of publicity or privacy, moral rights, or any other intellectual property rights.
25. By submitting, the entrant is guaranteeing that he/she holds the rights to everything in the image, and that it does not contain any copyright protected material that would require the consent of any third party; and does not violate any copyright, trademark, publicity right, or any other right of any third party.
26. Photographs and/or parents or legal guardians are solely responsible for obtaining proper releases for photographs which contain material or elements that are not owned by the entrant and/or which are subject to the rights of third parties, and/or if any persons appear in the photograph in the manner set forth in these rules without additional compensation.
27. If any person appearing in any photograph is under the age of eighteen, the signature of a parent or legal guarding is required for each release.

Judging

A panel of experts will evaluate each entrant's submission based on the following criteria: Impact, creativity, and technical excellence.

Determinations made by judges are final and binding.

- Impact: Viewing artwork/photographs for the first time always evokes a feeling. Sometimes they make us sad, happy, or angry. Sometimes they force us to look inward at ourselves. That is called impact, and the more powerful the image, the more powerful the emotional response of the viewer.
- Creativity: Your point of view is exactly that – yours, and it is unlike anyone else's. This element speaks directly to the perspective. It shows your imagination and how you used the medium to convey an idea, a message, or a thought to the viewer. This is how you differentiate yourself from others.
- Technical Excellence: This is the quality of the artwork/photo itself as it is presented for viewing. There are many aspects that speak to the qualities of technical excellence.
    - **In artwork, these include:**
        - Technique/Mastery of the medium
        - Composition
        - Detailing
        - Color Theory
        - Line Quality

        - Perspective
    - **In photography, these can include:**
        - Retouching
        - Manipulation
        - Sharpness
        - Exposure
        - Color Correction

There is no requirement to be a professional artist or photography when entering the Air Force Art & Photo Contest; however, Air Force Arts and Crafts strives to help artists and photographers improve their skills.

Release Statement

Limitation of Liability

By entering the Air Force Art & Photo Contest, all entrants agree to release, discharge, and hold harmless the Air Force Services Center (AFSVC) and its partners, affiliates, subsidiaries, advertising agencies, agents and their employees, officers, directors, and representatives from any claims, losses, and damages arising out of their participation in the Air Force Art & Photo Contest.

The entrant is responsible for ensuring submissions are received by the specified deadline. AFSVC is not responsible for the condition, delivery, or non-delivery of any submission or communication regardless of the cause or type of error be it human, electronic, virtual, technical, or mechanical.

Disqualification

AFSVC reserves the right to disqualify any entry submission for any reason at its sole absolute discretion. The decisions of AFSVC regarding the entrant eligibility disqualification and determination of winners shall be final and binding.

Privacy Act Statement

Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a) Purpose: To contact winners participating in web contests featured on https://forcesupport.awardsplatform.com and to add to the AFSVC and FSS customer databases for email notification of events, activities, and information. Routine Uses: This information will not be disclosed outside DoW. Disclosure/Effects: Disclosure is voluntary; however, entrants cannot participate in the contest without providing the contact information requested.