

The Congressional Award

— CONGRESS' AWARD FOR YOUTH —

It is a privilege to serve as the Chairman of the only charity of the United States Congress – the Congressional Award Foundation. Appointed to the Board of Directors by the House Democratic Leader, I am honored to serve at the pleasure of the congressional leadership to deliver this special youth program on behalf of the all members of the House and Senate.

It has been 36 years since Public Law 96-114, the Congressional Award Act, was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter. The effort was led by the late Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-WY) and the late Representative James J. Howard (D-NJ) and has prospered as a bipartisan effort to recognize achievement and volunteerism in America's youth. During this past year over 38,000 participants from all 50 states were actively working toward earning a Congressional Award and 5,000 new participants enrolled in the program. Since its inception, over 7 million hours of public service have been contributed to communities nationwide.

Each June, youth from across the nation are honored in the US Capitol for earning Congress' highest award for youth – the Congressional Award Gold Medal. Members of the House and Senate join the celebration to present Medals to their constituents and to meet with the families and advisors who have supported them in their journey.

Throughout the year, additional events are held in Washington, DC where members of Congress participate to raise awareness and funding from the private sector. These sponsored events are held on an annual basis and support the efforts of the foundation to recognize youth in all 50 states. The four signature fundraising events are the Youth Wellness Dinner, Youth & Technology Dinner, Golf Classic and Charity Poker Tournament. In addition to these events, state dinners occur on a rotating basis to help raise support for outreach efforts within those states. The schedule of events is available from the National Office, which is located on Capitol Hill in the Ford House Office Building.

The Congressional Award relies on support from congressional offices, adult volunteers, partnering youth organizations, and corporate sponsors in order to deliver this unique and worthwhile congressional program to youth across the country. I encourage you to assist us in recognizing young Americans who are making a positive difference in our world.

Sincerely,



Paxton K. Baker
Chairman

“ There are young people in this room who have overcome tremendous obstacles, but they pushed themselves and they made it. We are honoring them today.”





program areas

Through the Congressional Award program, the U.S. Congress challenges young Americans to challenge themselves, and recognizes young people who set and achieve goals in four program areas:

Voluntary Public Service

Sharing time and talents for the benefit of others

Personal Development

Pursuing a new interest or advancing to another level in an ongoing interest

Physical Fitness

Improving one's quality of life through participation in fitness activities

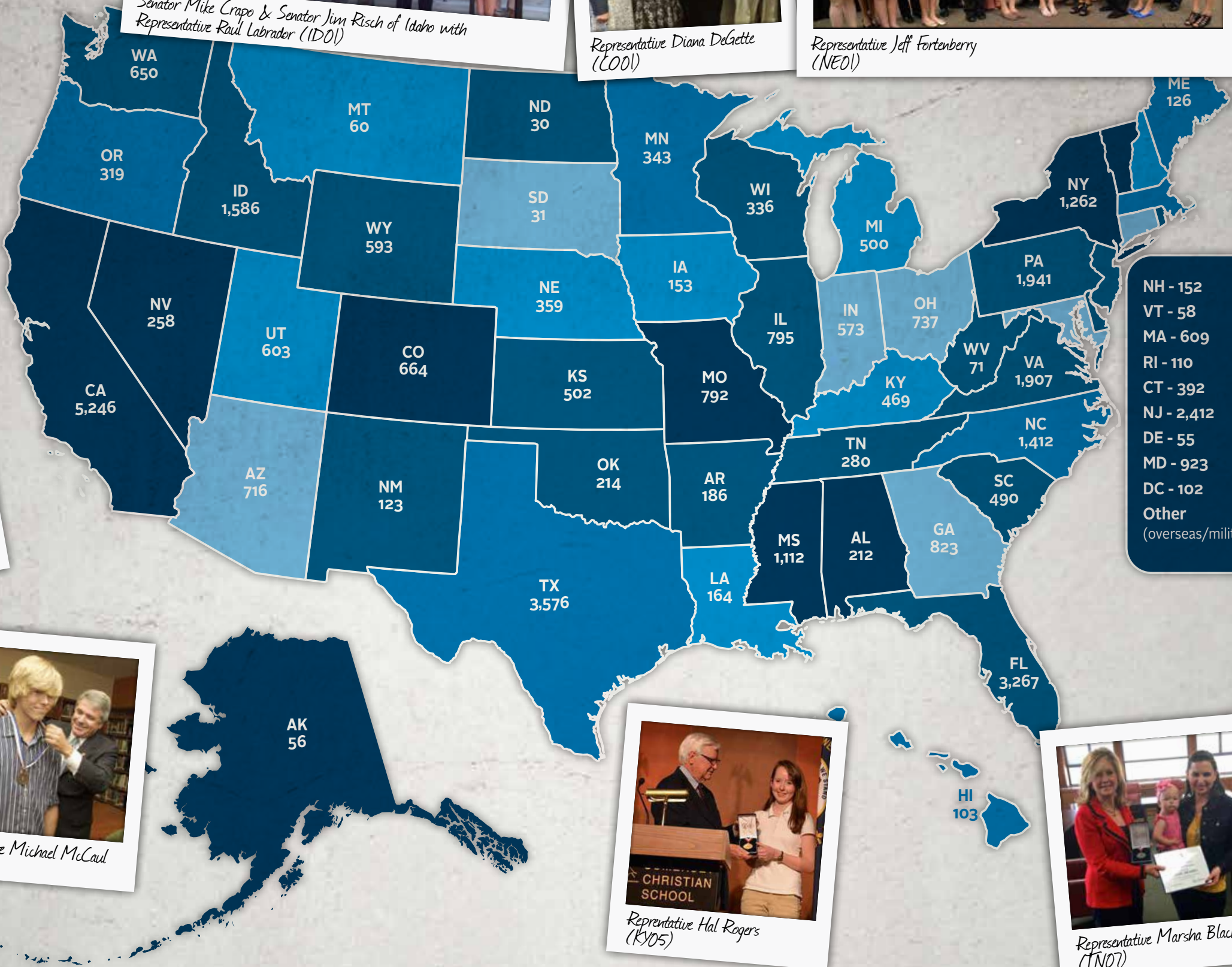
Exploration

Immersion in an unfamiliar environment or culture

state & local ceremonies

Youth in every state and congressional district are participating in the Congressional Award program. This map represents the number of young people actively enrolled in the program. Ceremonies take place at various venues and functions, such as high school assemblies, town hall meetings and state fairs. The purpose of these events is to present youth with their Bronze and Silver Medals for achieving their goals and providing service to their communities. The method of delivery of each Congressional Award is at the discretion of the member of Congress.

Total Active Participants
38,662



Senator Mike Crapo & Senator Jim Risch of Idaho with Representative Raul Labrador (ID01)



Representative Diana DeGette (CO01)



Representative Jeff Fortenberry (NE01)



Representative Bill Pascrell (NJ09)



Representative Steny Hoyer (MD05)



Senator Harry Reid, Nevada



Representative Nancy Pelosi (CA12)



Representative Michael McCaul (TX10)



Representative Hal Rogers (KY05)



Representative Marsha Blackburn (TN07)



Representative Rob Whittman (VA01)

the congressional award youth wellness dinner



Director of NIH Dr. Francis Collins performs an original song in honor of Congressional Award Medalists after receiving the 2013 Howard Wallop Leadership Award.



Former Senator Alan Simpson (WY) receives the Leadership Award for his continued support of the program.

The Congressional Award Foundation hosts an annual dinner with members of the Senate HELP and House Energy and Commerce Committees in Washington, DC. Formerly hosted by the late Senator Ted Kennedy, this annual event provides an opportunity for Republicans and Democrats alike to come together in celebration of their only charitable foundation. Specifically, this dinner advocates the importance of civic engagement and physical health and fitness for youth – two of the main components of the Congressional Award program.

Childhood obesity is an issue that continues to be an ongoing focus on Capitol Hill, and the Congressional Award program encourages activities that can prevent this epidemic from spreading to future generations of young people. Senators Tom Harkin, Mike Enzi, John Barrasso, John Boozman, Mike Lee and Representatives Joe Barton, David Camp, Elijah Cummings, Jim Clyburn, Richard Hudson, Xavier Becerra, Jeff Fortenberry, Gene Green, Sheila Jackson Lee, Ron Kind, Brendan Boyle, Mike McIntyre, Frank Pallone, Jared Polis, Tom Rooney, Paul Tonko and others have recently attended the dinner to help raise awareness of this issue and meet with the Congressional Award Gold Medalists from across the country.



Gold Medalist John Orton and Representative Debbie Dingell (MI12) pose with Leadership Award Honoree, the Honorable John Dingell.

Overcoming Obstacles

Just one year ago, prior to taking the stage at the Miss Idaho competition, a contestant and now Congressional Award Bronze Medalist suffering from Type 1 diabetes, felt conflicted about wearing her insulin pump during the Swimsuit competition in front of thousands of people.

Ultimately, Sandison chose to visibly display her insulin pump on stage to show support for her friend, Miss Idaho's Outstanding Preteen McCall Salinas, and her first-hand experience being a diabetic as well.

"McCall told me that she was too scared to get a pump herself, because she didn't know what people would think or if they would say she looked weird," said Sandison.

Sandison took to the stage at the Miss Idaho competition that year while being a participant in the Congressional Award program. Her ultimate goal to earn her bronze medal was 'to contribute to the diabetic community by spreading awareness about the disease, encouraging other diabetics and to raise money for a cure while promoting healthy lifestyles.'

"The Congressional Award has pushed me to lead a well-balanced life by being a constant reminder to stay healthy, improve myself daily, and contribute to my community, all while maintaining good grades in school."

To meet her goal, Sandison presented diabetes education speeches to groups with Camp Hodia, an organization that plans activities for youth with Type 1 diabetes. Now a medalist, Sandison sees the value in taking part in the Congressional Award.

"I learned how much of a difference it made for people to work together on reaching their goals," said Sandison. "For example, having a community of other Type 1 diabetics inspired me to take better care of my own blood sugars, and the walking club encouraged people to stay active through the walking club."

Family friend and marketing director at Salt & Light Radio, Pam Di Lucca served as Sandison's advisor for the Congressional Award.



sierra sandison, twin falls, id

"Sierra has demonstrated enthusiasm, diligence and maturity in her pursuit of her goals," said Lucca. "She has gained poise and knowledge which will enable her to make valuable contributions to her community in the future."

After being crowned Miss Idaho 2014, she went on to compete in the Miss America Pageant at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Sandison's placement landed her in the top 16 contestants. The crown ultimately went to Kira Kazantsev of New York State.

Sandison's story of courage and determination allowed her to challenge herself mentally and physically through her dedication to spreading awareness of diabetes.

"The Congressional Award has pushed me to lead a well-balanced life by being a constant reminder to stay healthy, improve myself daily, and contribute to my community, all while maintaining good grades in school," said Sandison. "I hope to continue this rewarding and motivating lifestyle long after I age out of the Congressional Award program."



hari ravichandran, holmdel, nj

Using STEM For Good

As any true scientist will tell you, science exists to help others and leads to the greatest advancements in humankind. Having a passion and gift in chemical engineering and research skills, Congressional Award Gold Medalist Hari Ravichandran wanted to apply his abilities to help others. The Congressional Award helped Hari achieve his ambitious goal.

As early as high school, Hari conducted water electrolysis research to support renewable energy storage, even earning honors for his efforts at regional and local science fairs. This success became the impetus for Hari's educational and career dreams.

As an intern for Bell Labs, he modeled the heat transfer of a semiconductor device to increase efficiency and reduce power consumption. When enrolled in college, he was drawn to chemical engineering courses and reached out to several professors for research opportunities. As an assistant in a university lab he researched thermites for military applications. Hari stayed on course with his research through the Naval Research Laboratory where he helped to improve the safety and performance of lithium-ion batteries.

Hari wasn't satisfied with simply refining his skills in his area of interest so he took initiative by volunteering to serve as the webmaster for The Vector, New Jersey Institute of Technology's college newspaper. "The Vector provides news to the student body. When I started as Webmaster, there was no website. I had to start from scratch and setup a new website. I did not know anything about web design when I started, so this project provided me the opportunity to get my feet wet in this new field."

His work with the school newspaper served a community of over ten thousand students. Hari is most delighted that his work has made it easier for students to access information about campus, community, national, and international events. "It also encourages online discussion and interaction with fellow students, thus providing a democratic outlet for the provision of news from a student perspective."

"I have matured and developed lasting skills that I can gainfully employ for the rest of my life."

"Through pursuing the Congressional Award, I have improved my leadership skills, bolstered my writing skills, and refined my research skills. I have matured and developed lasting skills that I can gainfully employ for the rest of my life."

Hari's achievement was recognized at the annual Congressional Award Gold Medal ceremony where he met with Senator Cory Booker and Congressman Bill Pascrell. He was fascinated to learn about current legislative issues and humbled that the members of the House and Senate took time out of their busy schedules for him.

"I would encourage young people to pursue the Congressional Award as it will be a learning experience for them, and allow them to advance as individuals who can both succeed and give back to their communities."



Representative Frank Pallone (NJ06) addresses the crowd.



Representative Joe Barton (TX06) speaks about civic engagement.

the congressional award youth and technology dinner

The Congressional Award Foundation hosts an annual dinner with members of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and House Energy and Commerce Committee. The purpose of the event is to advocate the importance of civic engagement among young people and the critical role technology plays to bring youth of all backgrounds together to serve a common purpose.

The digital world has served to strengthen various forms of youth engagement. Technology has increased youth awareness of issues and problems in their own communities as well as other parts of the world. It has become a powerful tool for communication and coordination of youth movements and creating a sense of solidarity among youth of all backgrounds.

This event has addressed topics such as online safety, distracted driving, privacy and cyber bullying.



Congressional Award Medalists from Mississippi meet with Senator Roger Wicker (MS) and Vice-Chair Dr. Linda Mitchell.

the congressional award gold medal ceremony



Chairman Paxton Baker and Senators Pat Roberts (KS) and Jerry Moran (KS), as well as Congressman Kevin Yoder (KS03) present Gold Medalist Priyanka Rao.



Gold Medalist Aarthy Shah is presented by Board Member Nick Cannon and Representative Suzan DelBene (WA01).



Senator Chris Murphy (CT) presents Gold Medalist Julianna Song with Chairwoman Dr. Linda Mitchell (left) and Board Member Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (TX18)



Senator Tim Scott (SC) with Congressional Award Gold Medalists outside of Cannon Caucus Room.

“ The 2015 Congressional Award recipients set the finest example and demonstrate dedication to improving their communities and the Nation as a whole. On behalf of the U.S. House of Representatives, it is my privilege to recognize the honored recipients of the 2015 Congressional Award Gold Medal—the highest achievement for America's youth.”

– Representative John Boehner (OHo8)
Speaker of the House of Representatives



2015 congressional award gold medalists

ALABAMA Senator Shelby Senator Sessions					
Representative Roby (ALo2) Reber Kennedy	Representative Eshoo (CA18) Virginia Cook Chester Leung Harrison Loughman	Representative Calvert (CA42) Caroline Dutzi Mili Patel Daniel Yoon	Representative Crenshaw (FLo4) Jessica Ocampo Sabrina Saintil	Representative Collins (GAo9) Carianna Farrell	KANSAS Senator Roberts Senator Moran
ARIZONA Senator McCain Senator Flake	Representative Lofgren (CA19) Jose Rocha	Representative Waters (CA43) David Seo	Representative Grayson (FLo9) Samuel Vilchez	Representative Yoder (KS03) Matthew Connell Patrick Connell Katherine Grabowsky Mahroosa Haideri Shanley Lenart Shivani Lokre Grace McGowan	MISSISSIPPI Senator Cochran Senator Wicker
Representative Gosar (AZo4) Brandon Colling	Representative Nunes (CA22) Jonathan Ye	Representative Walters (CA45) Joshua Chung Jonathan Jow Christopher Kim Emilie Liu Daniel Yang Joshua Yoo	Representative Rooney (FL17) Ashley Royce		Representative Kelly (MS01) Anne-Marie Prochaska
Representative Schweikert (AZo6) Aakanksha Saxena	Representative Knight (CA25) Melody Colliatie Lauren Seckar	Representative Lowenthal (CA47) Jennifer Lang Brooke Tobias	Representative Murphy (FL18) Gabriela Abadia Zoe Barbeau Maria Dattolo Randell Doane Casey Eble Michaela Fallon Jessica Li Savannah Logan Kailey McCormick Hugh McGinley Samuel Meyerson Andrew Morgan Jennifer Nicholas Zachary Panton Jessica Pritchard Marisa Salvador Samantha Singer Shelbi Smolak Jake Thiemann Robert Vaughn Christopher Warburton	KENTUCKY Senator McConnell Senator Paul	Representative Harper (MS03) Jessica Wilson Rachel Wilson
ARKANSAS Senator Boozman Senator Cotton	Representative Chu (CA27) Justin Cho Isaac Kuo	Representative Rohrabacher (CA48) Vincent Tran		Representative Rogers (KY05) Anna Rogers	Representative Lance (NJ07) John Dadouris Sam Kuster Taylor Murphy
Representative Womack (ARo3) Phillip Costello	Representative Schiff (CA28) Lesli Fernandez	Representative Issa (CA49) Julie Ambo		LOUISIANA Senator Vitter Senator Cassidy	Representative Pascrell (NJ09) Seth Alicea Daniel Cho Matthew Grillo
CALIFORNIA Senator Feinstein Senator Boxer	Representative Sherman (CA30) Griffin Armstorff	Representative Peters (CA52) Mackenzie Batten Jacob Chasan Morgan Redford Jessica Williams Cameron Zetterlund		Representative Richmond (LA02) Lorne Wasserman	Representative Wagner (MO02) Emily Chiles Brianne Flaherty Holly Laws Merran Waller
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Representative Swalwell (CA15) Annalise Stevenson Nihar Varanasi				Representative Visclosky (IN01) Daniel Cieply	Representative Israel (NY03) Arjun Kapoor
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Representative Smith (TX21)
Lincoln Abbott
Gopinath Thangada

Representative Olson (TX22)
Karishma Kashyap
Laura Mediorreal
Karen Yang

Representative Marchant
(TX24)
Raghav Kalra

Representative Bernice Johnson (TX30)
Adan Gonzalez

Representative Carter (TX31)
Rebecca Pulley

Representative Sessions
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Michael Boyson

Representative Vela (TX34)
Jeremy Geiger

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Senator Lee

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John Orton

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adan gonzalez, dallas, tx

Servant Leadership

As a U.S. Intercollegiate Boxing Association National Champion, Adan Gonzalez knows a thing or two about fighting. But his fight didn’t start in a boxing ring.

Born in Dallas, Texas to Mexican immigrants, Adan witnessed many of his peers succumb to poverty, drugs, and gang activity. His daily life was a fight in every sense of the word.

“I never understood that my life was difficult because everything about the struggle was ‘normal.’ I grew up listening to negative statistics about my community. Now it’s my responsibility for them to also know all the great things we can do.”

Now, a graduate of Georgetown University and Congressional Award Gold Medalist, Adan has made it his personal mission to ensure that no child in America has to go through these types of hardships. He founded the *Si Se Puede (Yes, We Can) Network*, a non-profit organization that prepares disadvantaged youth to be “candidates for scholarships, fellowships, and higher education pursuits.” By providing students with mentorship, leadership training and encouraging volunteerism, the *Si Se Puede Network* is cultivating relationships in underserved communities and equipping students with road maps for success.

Detailing his passion for education and servant leadership, Adan believes that “All children in our country have dreams but most of them will never have the opportunity to work towards them. I created the *Si Se Puede Network* because every child deserves the same chance to reach their potential. This is a platform that advocates the needs and desires of our underprivileged communities, builds scholars in the corners of these communities, and equips students with the skills to connect different communities. The *Si Se Puede Network* seeks to give a voice to the voiceless.”

“Learn to value where you’re from, whom you’re becoming, and what you want to do.”

Adan's inspiring story has allowed him to interact and engage with over 100,000 students and parents. His advice for young people that may seemingly be in a disadvantaged circumstance is to “learn to value where you’re from, whom you’re becoming, and what you want to do. We do not need a superman to come rescue us. We need each other to help discover our own powers.”

the congressional award charity golf tournament



Golf Classic Chairman David Falk makes opening remarks before play.

The Annual Congressional Award Golf Classic is held at the beautiful TPC Potomac Golf Course at Avenel Farm, in Potomac, Maryland. Recently redesigned by golf's most elite architects, the course is among those of the PGA Tour's acclaimed TPC Network of clubs. This event brings together current and former Members of Congress, as well as prominent guests such as NBA Hall of Famer Patrick Ewing, Alonzo Mourning, Dikembe Mutombo, Jeff Green, Chris Doleman, Emmitt Smith and Roger Clemens.



Honorary Co-Chair Senator Mike Enzi (WY) checks the final scores of his fellow golfers.



Golf carts lined up before the shotgun start



Representative Gregg Harper (MS03) and his Chief of Staff Michael Cravens (right) pose with Hall of Famer Emmitt Smith who was recognized with the Horizon Award for his work on behalf of America's Youth.



Play is halted for a picture with Representative James Clyburn (SC06) and friends of the Award.



Tournament Co-Chair, Congressman Billy Long (MO07) makes remarks and introduces professional poker player and special guest, Mr. Dennis Phillips.

the congressional award charity poker tournament

The Congressional Award Charity Poker Tournament is an annual event for poker enthusiasts from across the spectrum including Members of Congress, Chiefs of Staff, poker pros and friends of the Award for an evening of bluffs and blinds, all in the name of charity.

The event also features a Silent Auction and reception for those who may not be inclined to show-off their poker skills but still want to take part in the event. Special guests have included poker pros and philanthropists Phil Ivey and Dennis Phillips.



Congressman Jeff Duncan (SC03) and Congressman Jeff Denham (CA10) showing their support for fellow members of congress and chiefs of staff during the annual Congressional Award Poker Tournament.



Representatives Jeff Denham (CA10) and Billy Long (MO07) try to get pointers before play from Poker Players Dennis Phillips and Greg Raymer.



Representative Bobby Scott (VA03) mingles during the tournament.



Tournament Co-Chair, Congressman Dennis Heck (WA10) watches play during the tournament.

the congressional award state fundraising dinners



Senator Orrin Hatch (UT) addresses attendees at the Western State Dinner.



Representative Richard Hudson (NCo8) presents Representative Patrick Murphy (FL18) with a plaque recognizing his district for the most participants.



Members and medalists from Illinois present Hon. Ray LaHood with the Leadership Award. From left, Gold Medalist Graham Novak, Hon. Ray LaHood, Silver Medalist Noah Flynn, Representative Tammy Duckworth (ILo8), Representative Rodney Davis (IL13), representative Danny Davis (ILo7) and Secretary Rodney Slater, Vice Chairman of the Congressional Award.

The Congressional Award Foundation hosts state dinners and receptions on a rotating basis to raise awareness of program activities in that particular state. These events are all held in Washington, DC. Members of Congress attend to help thank the contributors from these states and to forge new state partnerships that will enhance the program.

Special awards are presented to individuals from these states who have displayed an outstanding commitment to improving the lives of our nation's young people. Recognition is also given to partnering organizations for providing critical support in the Congressional Award Foundation's efforts to make the Congressional Award a national opportunity.

Recent honorees include the Honorable Dirk Kempthorne, David Pryor, Robert Bennett, Alan Simpson, and Ray LaHood.

the congressional award contributors

The Congressional Award Foundation gratefully acknowledges the following corporations and individuals for generously providing support this year:

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POSITIVITY
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The Congressional Award

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The Congressional Award



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