

FREEDOM MATTERS

NEWS THAT MATTERS FROM THE DALLAS AREA CHAPTER

JULY 2025



President's Message

Howdy, good members of the Dallas Area Chapter! We've been busy this year!

The Accolades Awards Dinner feted deserving community volunteers and students. The George Washington Birthday Dinner featured Chris Cassidy, former Navy SEAL and astronaut, who now serves as the President of the National Medal of Honor Museum. Both events garnered needed funds to promote civic learning among our students and teachers. Thank you to those of you who attended...spread the word about what great events they are!

We sent nine students to Valley Forge this year, and two were asked to return for the Service Learning in Public Policy (SLiPP) in Philadelphia this August. We're also sending 12 teachers to Liberty Hill for summer professional development.

We're not resting on our laurels though! We've already begun planning for next year's students. One new program we are rolling out is a scholarship opportunity for students who have attended a Spirit of America workshop through the Dallas Area Chapter. Former attendees can apply for up to **five** \$1,500 college scholarships during their senior year. We'll be sending this info in August to high schools around the Metroplex, to encourage students to attend the free trip to Valley Forge as a sophomore or junior, then apply for a college scholarship during their senior year. If you know a high school sophomore or junior, encourage them to apply for our Spirit of America program! They might be able to help defray college costs as well as attend a fabulous leadership and civics conference.

Thank you for continuing to support the Dallas Area Chapter of Founding Forward. We ask that you renew your membership but also come to the events! We will have an amazing line-up for the 2025-26 school year with details to come. You'll have a great time with our programs, and you'll be simultaneously supporting civic engagement of our youth and those who teach them.

As always, feel free to contact me with any questions or comments.

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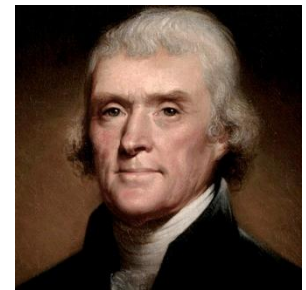
News Flash

*George Washington and Thomas Jefferson
to be Featured Guests at the
2026 George Washington Birthday Dinner*

The Dallas Area Chapter's celebration of the **United States Semiquincentennial** will start with a visit from both our first President and our third President who authored our country's Declaration of Independence.



George Washington



Thomas Jefferson

This exciting event will be on February 24, 2026 at the Communities Foundation of Texas. So, **mark your calendar!** You don't want to miss hearing their personal views of the significance of events taking place in Philadelphia 250 years ago. Presidential historian Talmage Boston will moderate the discussion.

United States Semiquincentennial

AMERICA



250th Birthday Celebration
of the United States

Join in the Celebration!

2025 - 2026 Chapter Events

Accolades - National Awards	11/11/2025
George Washington B'day Dinner	2/24/2026
Spirit of America - Valley Forge	3/26-29/2026
Inspirations - Students/Teachers	4/7/2026

For sponsorship information, please see page 3.

Accolades

The Awards Dinner of the Dallas Area Chapter

The Founding Forward Dallas Area Chapter (DAC) held its 53rd annual awards dinner, "Accolades," on Thursday, November 7, 2024, at the Communities Foundation of Texas. DAC President Trasa Cobern provided opening and closing remarks and presented the special Dallas Area Chapter President's Salute award to the family of City of Dallas Police Officer Darron Burks, who was tragically killed in the line of duty on August 29, 2024. Accepting the award was David Harmer, Founding Forward's National Director, gave a very informative talk about our new organization, and a short video entitled "Follow Us Forward" was shown. Dr. Ben Voth, Director of SMU Speech and Debate Programs, gave the invocation and served as master of ceremonies during the national award presentations. The Boy Scout Troop 707 Color Guard presented and retired the colors. Presenting the awards were Lynn Hidell, DAC Awards Vice President, Julie Grigsby, Highland Park McCullough Middle School Teacher, and President Trasa Cobern.



2024 Honorees and presenters shown LtoR/Back are Shedrick Parks, David Harmer, Julie Grigsby, Lynn Hidell, Troup 707 Color Guard, Joe Anderson (Troup 707 Scout Master), and Trasa Cobern. Shown LtoR/Front are Slone McNutt, James Park, Ellie Viguerie, Constance Olvera Irigooyen, Hannah Corder, Ellie Crosland, Jon Gray, Dallas Cothrum, Jen Leney, and William McKenzie

Six students were honored in the Student Essay category for their essays on the topic: "Why are responsible citizens important to our system of government? What can I do to develop the necessary traits to become one and encourage others to do so as well?" The students were Hannah Corder, Constance Olvera Irigooyen, Isabel Luu, Slone McNutt, James Park and Ellie Viguerie.

Honored in the Adult Community category were 6 Stone mission Network (accepted by Jen Leney), Ellie Crosland (Be Kind, Be Inclusive, Be Super Duper), and TX Rangers pitcher Jon Gray (Military/Soldiers Project). Honored in the Youth Community category was Scout Troop 707 (Lake Highlands American Flag project), and honored in the Public Communication category were DMN contributing columnists Dallas Cothrum (Celebrating Independence Day) and William McKenzie (Bringing History Lessons to Life).



George Washington Birthday Celebration

The annual celebration of George Washington's Birthday was held on February 25 at the Communities Foundation of Texas. Chaired by Julie Noble (Vice President, Programs) with help from a host of member volunteers, it was a most enjoyable evening which featured a presentation by Chris Cassidy, former Navy Seal and NASA astronaut and now the President and CEO of the new National Medal of Honor Museum in Arlington, TX which opened on March 25.

DAC President Trasa Cobern gave an opening welcome and closing remarks while John Meko, the National President of Founding Forward, provided an update on the exciting plans for Founding Forward. Thanks go to the SAR Color Guard, Coleen Steblein (bagpiper), Ben Voth (invocation), Dr. Carey Cannon (national anthem), Jack Wyman (MC), and especially the event sponsors.



National Medal of Honor Museum



On February 24, a sponsor reception was held at the home of Jo and John Guittard for the DAC Board and event committee to visit with and thank event sponsors and to talk with John Meko.



Event Sponsorship

Sponsorships and donations are what enable us to send students and teachers to Philadelphia each year for educational workshops and seminars. Please consider sponsoring one of our events or giving a donation to the DAC Scholarship Fund as part of our country's 250th birthday celebration.

For more information, please contact Dennis D'Amico (DennisDAmico@att.net).

Spirit of America

On April 3-6 the chapter sent nine students to the youth leadership conference at Valley Forge. Chaperoned by VP of Education Kyle Norwood along with Caroline Keeland, the students enjoyed four days of focused educational experiences to boost their understanding of America's history and its promising future. They worked with other students from across the country to strengthen leadership skills and understanding of the relevance of our country's founding documents.

Acknowledged at the SOA award ceremony were Aarush Akkineni (Best Sandwich Maker), Navya Kammend (Best Fashion), Evan Young (Pillar of Respect), and Ashlyn Tullier (Most Aquatic). Gabby Guajardo, returned this year as a student ambassador. Aarush Akkineni will attend the Service Learning in Public Policy program this summer.



Shown above with Thomas Jefferson (center) are (L to R) Evan Young (TXVS Fort Stockton); Rabel McNutt (Hockaday); Austin Smith (Colleyville Heritage); Navya Kammend (Grapevine); Sadie Burt (Flower Mound); Gabby Guajardo, Ashlyn Tullier & Maggie Parsons (Sanger); and Aarush Akkineni (Grapevine).



Teacher Seminars and Traveling Workshops

This summer the chapter will be sponsoring 12 teachers to attend graduate programs in Philadelphia. The programs they selected, along with their names and schools, are as follows: War on Terror, Tara Bart (St. Elizabeth - Waxahachie) and Madison Sanford (N. Crowley H.S.); American Rev. North, Matt Collins (Western Hills H.S. - Benbrook) & Jennifer Collins (Steward Elem. - Benbrook); American Rev. Middle States, Chad Hannon (iUniversity Prep - Bedford) & Kathy Ramirez (Rosemont M.S. - FW); Lafayette's Revolutions, Dana Dougherty (McKinney H.S.) & Jennifer Tear (St. Joseph Elem. - Waxahachie); 1st Amendment Freedoms, Linda Gooding (Webb M.S. - The Colony); Virginia Presidents, Amy Marshall (Carroll H.S. - Euless); History of Immigration, Courtney Parker (Saginaw H.S. - FW); and Declaration of Independence, Lisa Murphy (Carroll H.S. - Euless).

Inspirations

The Founding Forward Dallas Area Chapter held its annual Student/Teacher Night, "Inspirations," on April 22 at the University Park Library. Students who attended this April's Spirit of America program at the Valley Forge Campus, and teachers attending one of the teacher seminars last summer, gave inspiring talks about their experiences and what their trips meant to them. The meeting began with introductions by Trasa Cobern (DAC President), David Harmer (Founding Forward National Director), and Kyle Norwood (DAC Education VP)

Students presenting were Austin Smith, Ashlyn Tullier, Maggie Parsons, Navya Kammend, Aarush Akkineni, Evan Young, Rabel McNutt, and Sadie Burt.

Seminars attended by the presenting teachers and their schools are as follows: Immigration - Emily Rollen (New Horizon HS Joshua) & Stephanie Johnson (Burlison HS Ft. Worth); E. Pluribus Unum - Tara Bart (St. Elizabeth Catholic School Waxahachie); WWI - Gabrielle Fletcher (N. Central TX College Gainesville); and Civil War East - Linda Gooding (Webb MS The Colony).

