

San Diego students traveled to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania to attend the “Spirit of America” Leadership Conference. There, they experienced mock congressional debates, participated in a free enterprise challenge, visited historical sites and engaged in interactive educational activities. This experience allowed students to develop their critical thinking and leadership skills while understanding their responsibilities as citizens. Students lived on campus during the program, identifying opportunities for future contributions to society while creating new, lasting friendships and finding common ground as Americans with peers from across the country.



Chloe Keller - Clairemont High; Natalya Phillips – Madison High; Alyssa Lee – Mission Bay High; Gavin Ragusa – Mission Bay High; Angel Lara – Southwest High; Thomas Jefferson; Kyan Wallien – Clairemont High; Jyanna Gamba – Mar Vista High; Lynette Garcia – Southwest High; Katherine Liang – Mission Bay High and Camila Medina – Southwest High.

Members, family and friends attended the Annual Awards Luncheon to honor the National Award recipients of the George Washington Honor Medals. Honorees explained to the guests their projects and contributions that made for a better community and society. Larry Zeiger presided as MC and Joyce Truett, president of the FF San Diego Chapter introduced teacher, Aaron Sullivan as the featured speaker. He shared his experience at the Founding Forward teacher seminar held in Philadelphia this last summer. Rose Perkins offered her beautiful baskets for the opportunity drawing.

Seen below is Joyce Truett, President of the FF San Diego chapter with the 2025 -2026 Awardees.



Arden Pala



Mary Jo Longo



Ursula Sorensen



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

JOYCE TRUETT

My very favorite part of being involved in FF is the leadership program that, with your membership dues, donations, and attendance at the annual awards luncheon, you help send students to Valley Forge each year. Initial planning goes on behind the scenes. Then it's time to meet parents and students for "commitment" day, the day they make their down payments, learn the procedures and get ready to spread their wings for a national adventure. This is also when the board first meets the students and we are as excited as they are.

The next time we meet is for the Allied Gardens Optimist Club's Fly-Away Breakfast where the students, Optimist members and the board share breakfast and interact. The program ends with presentation of a check from the Allied Gardens Optimist Club to our scholarship fund for the trip.

One week later the students really do fly away to Valley Forge. Next time I'll tell you what happens there. It's an adventure.

Please join us for our Annual Day at the Races, Sunday, July 26, 2026 at the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club. We hope to see you there.

MEMBERSHIP MESSAGE

The San Diego Chapter FF is able to continue its mission... to educate youth, provide exceptional leadership training at the Freedoms Foundation Headquarters in Valley Forge, PA, to an elite group of students who go through a precise application and interview process, and recognize outstanding volunteers dedicated to making a difference in our community... only through your membership and extra support.

If you have not renewed your membership, please do so TODAY. For credit card payments, contact Treasurer Paula Day at 619-395-1405 or e-mail phday@cox.net. Share the chapter website address with friends. Encourage them to join us. New and faithful members, supporting your board of directors, make good things happen!

OUR CHERISHED DONORS

We appreciate our contributors

Allied Gardens Optimist Club
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 Sally Syren
 Eric Syverson
 Joyce Truett



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

MEMORIAL DAY - MAY 25, 2026
 FLAG DAY - JUNE 14, 2026
 INDEPENDENCE DAY - JULY 4, 2026
 ANNUAL DAY AT THE RACES - JULY 26, 2026



A STUDENT'S VIEW of VALLEY FORGE AND WASHINGTON D.C.

(you'll love the part about the bugs...edited to fit in space)

Kyan Wallien wrote... *thank you so much for everything that made this trip amazing and memorable. I had a very interesting experience. Valley Forge was amazing. I got to meet some people, I met a kid from Utah, and some people from Florida. We exchange on Instagram. It was very cool to meet them. I also just realized that Valley Forge was humongous Then we went to D.C. The drive was about an hour and a half. The Hotel room was really nice. No dead bugs in the room. At the Valley Forge dorm, there was a dead cricket in my room. D.C. was really cool, first time going to the Smithsonian Museums. My favorite ones were the Natural and American History Museums. The flight back was good, but I really miss D.C. and my friends. So for the overall trip, I had an amazing time and was able to communicate and assist two older ladies on the night tout in Washington D, C. Thank You so much for making this trip happen!*

AWARDS LUNCHEON ~ FEBRUARY 12, 2026



Ursula Sorensen and Friends



Student Representatives to Valley Forge



Honor Medal Honorees

FLY AWAY BREAKFAST ~ April 9, 2026



Joyce Truett and Bill Glover



Jyanna Gamba



Natalya Phillips



Gavin Ragusa

STUDENTS ATTEND "THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA" LEADERSHIP PROGRAM and WASHINGTON D.C. – April 17-22, 2026



At the Visitor Center at Valley Forge taking a moment to learn more about the men and women who sacrificed for our future nation's freedom. General Washington ever present.



Final day at Founding Forward and getting to tour historical sites in Philadelphia. Not only learning our country but being where it all began.



Bonus visit to the Spy Museum! A lot of hands-on activities, as well as learning about U.S. spy master himself, George Washington.



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN MILITARY HEROES MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 25, 2026

Memorial Day is considered a federal holiday in [the United States](#), in which we honor and mourn members of the military who have passed away while serving in the United States Armed Forces. On this day, we pay tribute to those who gave their lives while protecting and serving their nation.

CULTURAL TRADITIONS

- **Memorial Day poppies:** People wear poppies to honor America's war dead in a Memorial Day tradition that dates back to the World War I poem "In Flanders Fields."
- **National Moment of Remembrance:** It is encouraged that all Americans pause wherever they are at 3 p.m. local time on Memorial Day for a minute of silence to remember and honor those who have died in service to the nation.
- **Hanging a flag at half-staff:** [The flag](#) should be displayed at half-staff only until noon, then go up to full staff until sundown.
- **Playing "Taps":** "Taps" is a traditional part of Memorial Day celebrations.
- **Visiting a local veterans cemetery:** Bring flowers and lay them by a grave that doesn't have any. Or volunteer to [clean the graves of fallen soldiers](#).

FOUNDING FORWARD ANNUAL DAY AT THE RACES SUNDAY, JULY 26, 2026 DEL MAR THOROUGHBRED CLUB

Honoring...

Ursula Sorensen & Mary Jo Longo
San Diego Volunteers Extraordinaire!
All funds raised help us send students to the Spirit of America Youth Leadership Program at Valley Forge!



JOIN US FOR A NO-HOST LUNCH IN IL PALIO Italian restaurant located in the Equus Skyroom overlooking the finish line. Derby Buffet or a la carte also available.

TURF CLUB attire required.

TICKETS will be held at the FF-SD table in front of the Turf Club Admissions Gate until 12:30 P.M.