



## July 2021 Newsletter

### President's Message



2020-2021 was quite a different year for our chapter. In March after we kicked off our planned yearlong 50th Anniversary celebration at our 2020 George Washington Birthday Dinner, everything shut down

for what seemed to be forever!

Great News! The celebration is **on again**. Though we really missed our in-person meetings, we continued to support our mission.

Since we were unable to send students to the Youth Leadership Conferences at Valley Forge this year, we held special essay contests. While our teachers could not attend last summer's Teacher Graduate Programs, they were able to attend new virtual learning sessions and will be attending the programs this summer.

While not able to hold our Awards Banquet, we were successful in having five of our 2020 nominees selected to receive the George Washington Honor Medal. We are currently working on the 2021 nominations and plan to honor two years of recipients in November.

Especially disappointed that we were unable to celebrate George's birthday with our annual banquet, we hosted a successful series of ZOOM meetings to help educate and challenge our members. Stay tuned to hear the upcoming news about our birthday banquet next February.

Finally, in May our board hosted national FFVF president David Harmer at a dinner to hear how the Freedoms Foundation Valley Forge campus coped with the pandemic and to discuss their current plans.

Especially important this time of year is **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**. Please use the enclosed form to renew your membership. Much has been accomplished, but much remains. Please join our **Member Get a Member** campaign.

Thank you for your continued help and support. I am looking forward to a great year for our chapter and would love to hear any suggestions that you may have.

Phil John, President

E: Phil@JohnDFW.com C: 214-802-4226



### Our Celebration Is On Again!!

We look forward to celebrating with you at our 2021-2022 in-person Nov. 8 Awards Banquet, February George Washington Birthday Dinner, and April Student-Teacher Night events!!

Since chartered in 1970, we have sent over 330 students and over 100 teachers to Valley Forge, recognized over 600 Dallas area citizens with national awards, successfully sponsored nine teachers who received the Leavey Award for Excellence in Private Enterprise Education, and provided one or more programs each year focusing on history or current events for our members and guests.

Our goal is to steadily grow our accomplishments in all areas as we move beyond our half-century of service to our community. To accomplish this, we need to grow our membership and, hence, the **Member Get A Member** campaign described in emails and your membership packet.

Please participate by sharing our story with family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues and encouraging them to join or come to one of our events to find out what we're all about. And then we'll all celebrate!



David Harmer Dinner

(L to R) Julie Noble, Jack Smith, Ann & Dennis D'Amico, Shirley Smith, Phil John, Carolyn Willard, **David Harmer**, Wes & Kay Poynor, Fen & Sharman Vesecky, Pierce Noble and Sue John

### **Special COVID Essay Contests**

Due to cancellation of the Spring 2021 Youth Leadership Conferences held at the Valley Forge campus due to COVID, the Dallas Area Chapter sponsored a student essay contest with the topic "Battle Against COVID" which focused on our nation's battle to defeat the COVID-19 enemy while protecting its population and the freedoms our founders fought to create. Students were invited to think and write about how their participation in this patriotic battle has led them to become better citizens. In addition, a contest for JROTC students was sponsored with the topic being "What is the price of freedom?" which is the 2021 FFVF Military Essay topic for their national awards program.

Special thanks to Bill Dean, our 2020-2021 Awards Vice-President, and to Julie Grigsby and Kay Keeland, our Education Vice-Presidents, for their work in creating something to help us bridge the gap between the 2020 and 2022 Youth Leadership conferences. Unfortunately, in-person awards presentations with photos were prevented due to COVID restrictions. Our only photo (to the right) shows the nine essay participants from Highland Park Middle School. All participants received certificates, and the essay winners received cash prizes.



(L to R) Sophia Ghobriel, Maria Garzon, Mila Degal, Kendall Sullivan, Cate Margolin, Nina Del Tufo, Sydney Levin, Noemi Tsai, and Elle Noonan.

Winners for the "Battle Against COVID" essay contest were Sophie Ghobrien (first), Noemi Tsai (second), and Sydney Levin (third) from HPMS. First place for the JROTC essay contest went to both Ana Moreno Flores from MacArthur HS and Daisy Salaze from Bryan Adams HS, second place went to Michelle Martin (BAHS), and third place went to Dianna Garcia (BAHS).

### **Plans for March 2022 Youth Leadership Conferences**

Our chapter plans to send 20 students to the March 10-13 Youth Leadership Conference next spring. Student packets will be sent out in September to our contacts in schools in the Dallas area. **Please help us identify high school juniors who would be interested in applying for one of our full scholarships to attend the Valley Forge conference. It's a great opportunity for children or grandchildren of members or of member's friends. Send your suggestions to [FFVFDallas@gmail.com](mailto:FFVFDallas@gmail.com).**

### **2020 Summer Virtual Learning Series**

Due to COVID, the acclaimed teacher travel programs were cancelled last summer which was very disappointing to the 12 area teachers who were selected to attend. Thanks to FFVF donors, however, the programs were replaced with a free summer virtual Learning Series with nationally recognized scholars and Medal of Honor Recipients. In addition to teachers, FFVF members were invited to attend. Topics included World War II, The Presidency and Electoral Powers, Technology and The War on Terror, and the Philadelphia Campaign of the American Revolution.

### **2021 Summer Graduate Teacher Programs**

FFVF is pleased to bring back the summer teacher travel programs this year, and the Dallas Area Chapter will sponsor four teachers to attend one of the six programs being offered. Tuition has been provided by FFVF donors, and the Dallas Area Chapter will provide the teachers with travel stipends.

The four teachers have all elected to attend programs on the American Revolution - Philadelphia Campaign. Matt Collins (Western Hills HS, Benbrook), Samantha Keaton (Young Women's Leadership Academy, Fort Worth), and Rebecca Farr (Nelson MS, McKinney) will attend on June 27 – July 2. Margie Fitzgerald (Walker MS, Little Elm) will attend on July 18-23.



## 50<sup>th</sup> Dallas Area Chapter Awards Banquet

*An In-Person Event!*

The Dallas Area Chapter of the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge will hold its 50<sup>th</sup> Awards Banquet at the Museum of Biblical Art on **November 8, 2021**, where we will honor our George Washington Honor Medal recipients for 2020 and 2021 and also a special award recipient (see below).

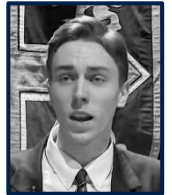
**Please mark your calendar!**

The 2020 GWHM recipients that we will honor have gone “above and beyond the call of duty” on local, regional, or national level projects to serve their community. Selected by a distinguished independent National Awards jury panel comprised of officers from national service, civics, veterans, and educational organizations, the honorees (and their award category) are Beverly Darling (Adult Community), Luke Blazek (Youth Community), brothers Mirza Faizan and Mirza Rizwan (Educator), and William Murchison (Public Communication). *The 2021 honorees will be announced in October.*

Bev Darling has spent 18 years as a creative, committed, and hard-working participant in hospital volunteer services with her efforts to honor veterans. In 2017, she developed the Veterans Visiting Veterans program at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Plano. She also helped start the *Final Salute* program which honors vets who pass away at the hospital.



Luke Blazek has created a platform called **Speak4America** that allows high school students to put their words into action at the Cambridge School in Dallas. He has inspired students to use their communication skills to participate in community service. They did by providing a “call-to action” for volunteers to help the school deal with significant tornado damage and by encouraging all to wear a mask due to COVID.



The Mirza brothers are being recognized for their significant contribution to education made by the development of a highly successful approach to teaching our future generation how to think like innovators. Rizwan was the originator of the step-by-step process and Faizan founded the DiscoverSTEM Academy in Plano where students use the process to solve real-world problems in its Incubation Center.



Bill Murchison, a former associate editor and senior columnist with the Dallas Morning News whose newspaper column has been nationally syndicated since 1981, is being recognized for his lifetime of journalism, his insights into America’s history, and his dedication to the truth. He is also the author of the book, [The Cost of Liberty: The Life of John Dickinson](#).

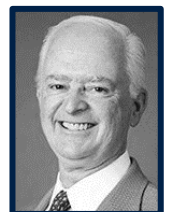


**Know of potential GWHM candidates? Please notify Kay Poynor (VP Awards).  
Deadline for 2021 GWHM nominations has been extended to September 1.**

### Distinguished Citizen Award

For the fifth time in our chapter’s history, a Dallas area resident is being honored with a special national award. William P. Benac, Sr. will be receiving the Distinguished Citizen Award at Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge’s annual gala on the evening of September 21<sup>st</sup>. He will also attend and be recognized at our November Awards Banquet.

Bill is the Founder of the DFW Alliance for Religious Freedom which brings together people of faith, business, politics, and general interest to jointly promote and defend religious freedom. The Alliance seeks to discuss public policy without being political, focusing on the respect for the rights and beliefs of all believers. Bill is also the President of the Foreign Advisory Board of the Pathways India, a charitable institution that serves poor as well as physically and intellectually disabled children and adults.



Previous Dallas area residents receiving special national recognition are Trammel Crow, Tom Landry, Roger Staubach, and Ross Perot, Sr. Also being honored at the September Valley Forge gala will be the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation and Ala Standord, MD.

## Dallas Area Chapter Creates Special ZOOM Meetings During Our Year of COVID

Since our in-person awards banquet, George Washington birthday dinner, and Student/Teacher Night could not be held this past year, Dennis D'Amico, our innovative VP of programs, created a successful series of ZOOM meetings for our membership and guests. Special thanks to Wes Poynor for his technical support and Talmage Boston for conducting many of the interviews. If you missed them, links for most will be soon added to our chapter website (Dallas.FreedomsFoundation.org). Alternately you may go directly to dropbox (<https://bit.ly/2VlqdPQ>). Please select the desired meeting and download the file to your computer. This will help avoid bandwidth issues and provide a smoother playback.

### Meeting Summaries

- ✪ September 9, 2020: "Every Election Matters, But Some More than Others: Tectonic Presidential Elections in American History" with Dr. Jeff Engel, SMU Center for Presidential History\*
- ✪ December 2, 2020: [How Ike Led](#) with author Susan Eisenhower and Talmage Boston
- ✪ December 23, 2020: "Christmas at Mount Vernon" with Jessie MacLeod, Assoc. Curator
- ✪ January 27, 2021: "The Freedoms Mission at the Bush Institute" with Ken Hersh, President/CEO George W. Bush Presidential Center\*
- ✪ February 24, 2021: [George Washington: The Political Rise of America's Founding Father](#) with author David O. Stewart and Talmage Boston
- ✪ March 24, 2021: "Responsibly Safeguarding the First Amendment" with Grant Moise, Publisher of the Dallas Morning News
- ✪ April 21, 2021: "The Gardens of Mount Vernon: Lessons from Mount Vernon for Your Home's Landscape and Garden" with Dean Norton, Mount Vernon Director of Horticulture and Bill Welch, Professor and Texas AgriLife Extension Service Landscape Horticulturist
- ✪ May 19, 2021: [Lincoln in Private: What His Most Personal Reflections Tell Us About Our Greatest President](#), a glimpse into our 16th president through his private notes with author Ron C. White
- ✪ June 9, 2021: [Lady Bird Johnson, Hiding in Plain Sight](#), a splendidly enhanced portrait of the First Lady from Texas who some say was the power behind the president with author Julia Sweig
- ✪ July 14, 2021: "Teaching America: Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge" with David Harmer, FFVF President & CEO; Trasa Cobern, FFVF-Dallas member, former teacher and Valley Forge attendee; Luke Blazek, 2020 GWHM recipient (see Page 2); and moderator Steve Cotton\*\*

\* Not recorded

\*\* Special meeting of the Rotary Club of Dallas



## 2021–2022 Dallas Area Chapter Board

FFVFDallas@gmail.com

### Officers

President	Phil John
First VP, Programs	Dennis D'Amico
VP, Awards	Kay Poynor
VP, Education	Julie Grigsby
	Kay Keeland
VP, Membership	Carolyn Willard
Recording Secretary	Sharman & Fen Vesecky
Treasurer	Pierce Noble
Immediate Past President	Wes Poynor

### Appointees

Chapter Advisors	Sue John
	Julie Noble
	Shirley & Jack Smith
Marketing Director	Dennis D'Amico
Finance Chairman	Pierce Noble
Data Base Manager	Wes Poynor
Student Education Chairman	Kay Keeland
Teacher Education Chairman	Wes Poynor
Yearbook Chairman	Jack Smith