

The Congressional Award

What came first – the chicken or the egg? BSA Venturing and the Congressional Award have a chicken and egg relationship. Look at the Congressional Award requirements (following in boldface) and compare them with the Venturing Gold requirement #5 (following in parentheses): setting and accomplishing goals in **Public Service** (Service to Others), **Personal Growth** (Community/Family, Citizenship, Leadership), **Physical Fitness** (Total Fitness) and participating in an **Exploration/Expedition** (Outdoor Experience). Which came first? The Congressional Award under Jimmy Carter – or the Exploring Gold? Who cares! The fact is, the two programs complement each other and work together beautifully.

If you are between 14 and 24 and reach the gold medal (400 hours of service; 200 hours of physical fitness; 200 hours of personal growth and 7 nights in exploration/expedition), you will be invited to an awesome ceremony in Washington, D.C. to receive your award. Here are some notes from my Gold Award ceremony.

The June 2005 Congressional Award Ceremony in Washington, D.C.

On Wednesday, June 22, 2002, at 10:00 a.m., 162 young people were presented with The Congressional Award Gold Medal, the highest honor bestowed upon young people by the U.S. Congress in a formal ceremony at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, D.C. The ceremony recognizes initiative, achievement and service in America's youth. The Joint Leadership of Congress presided over the ceremony and Dana Bash, CNN's White House Correspondent served as Master of Ceremonies. The keynote address was delivered by Desiree Sayle, Deputy Assistant to the President of the United States and Director of the USA Freedom Corps.

John M. Falk, Esq., of Compressus, Inc., and Chairman of the Congressional Award Foundation Board of Directors, reported that 2005 was the largest presentation in the history of the program. Of the 242 young adults who earned the award, 162 attended the formal ceremony in Washington, D.C.



United States Senator Larry Craig welcomed the assembly, and introduced "one special member" of the audience, the newly installed Boy Scouts of America National Venturing President – me! He had me stand and be recognized by the audience.

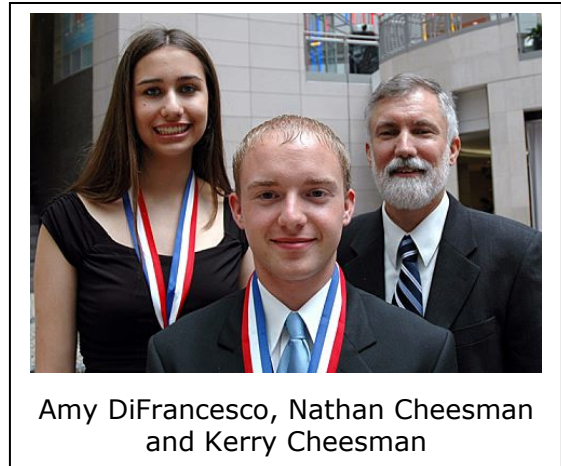
Craig stated that The Congressional Award Gold Medal physically has, on one side, words that "best defined the qualities found in those who have earned the award: initiative, achievement, service. "

Desiree Sayle recalled President Bush's suggestion that every American give 4000 hours of service and that we be "citizens, not spectators". The assembled youth had started achieving that goal.

When presenting my Gold Medal, Dana Bash commented upon the BSA Venturing Presidency, and talked about how I "developed Project Pride, sending cards to troops in Iraq and spent two weeks building homes for families in Mexico with Esperanza".

Of the 242 Congressional Award 2005 Gold Medal recipients, 43 listed an affiliation with BSA. Here is information about some of them:

- Nathan Cheesman, son of Venturing Board Member and Venturing TRUST award author, Kerry Cheesman, volunteered with his local Boy Scout units to help youth progress in many different outdoor and leadership skills.
- Joshua Harrison, BSA Venturing Crew President, attended Okpik and led his Venturing Crew in a four-night expedition to King City, California. Joshua, of Goose Creek, South Carolina, wrote, "I have found education and training is the way to really be prepared as the Boy Scout motto teaches."
- Venturing Silver Award and Eagle Scout recipient Dale Hines II is an Assistant Council Commissioner for the California Inland Empire Council.
- Alex Glowatz of Lebanon, New Jersey, completed his Gold Medal in a Scout Venturing trip to Acadia National Park, involving hiking, biking, sea kayaking and camping.
- Eagle Scout Timothy D. Cooksy served as a mentor to youth of his community in Zion, Illinois.
- Newell Colbath of Jupiter, Florida, hiked at Philmont and volunteered with BSA.
- Eagle Scout Stuart Hurd of Springfield, Missouri, participated in camping trips with Boy Scouts and spent 14 days at Philmont.
- Danny Mendoza of Sunnyside, Washington, wrote of his expedition to Philmont, hiking 119 miles.
- Peter Ketchum of Nineveh, Indiana, helped younger Scouts get closer to their ultimate goal of becoming an Eagle Scout, working at campouts and Scout camp, enjoying the enthusiasm of younger Scouts.
- David Kobulnicky of Lake Ridge, Virginia, taught Leave No Trace.
- Eagle Scout Adam Ardakanian of Ocean, New Jersey, organized an planned a Thanksgiving camping trip with his Scout Troop, where he learned how to cook a Thanksgiving feast for over ninety people, outdoors, without electricity.



Amy DiFrancesco, Nathan Cheesman and Kerry Cheesman

- Eric Francisco of Los Alamos, New Mexico, organized a canoe trip to Boundary Waters in Canada as a college graduation gift for his brother and brother's friends.
- Eagle Scout Paul Rademacher of Setauket, New York, continues to serve his Boy Scout Troop and has volunteered at a day camp where he led a science and nature program.
- Jeffrey M. Reisenauer of Pearl River, New York, knows what a positive influence Scouting has on young people, stating, "the skills and values you learn can bring life long benefit." He attended a 16 day Philmont trek.
- Christopher Rogers of Shreveport, Louisiana, served as an Assistant Scoutmaster and attended Philmont, climbing Tooth of Time.
- Eagle Scout Zane William Shuck of Poquoson, Virginia, volunteered at the local hospital.
- Evan Spencer of Flagstaff, Arizona, led his Boy Scout troop on several overnight hikes and planned a weeklong camping experience on Catalina Island, California.
- Sean Storey of Sierra Vista, Arizona, volunteered provided a positive image of Scouting by working in local schools and daycare centers while helping youth in his community.
- Matthew Puchferran of Boca Raton, Florida, coordinated the largest youth-led National Day of Prayer Teen Freedom Rally in the country in 2004, with over 1600 teens and families gathered in the city amphitheater.
- Eagle Scout Jamie Chalfant of Los Angeles, California, volunteered at the LA National Cemetery's annual Memorial Day flag placement event.
- Geoffrey Glowalla of Santa Ana, California, completed his personal development goal by completing JLT, then worked as a counselor at a camp and hiked Philmont during a 10-day backpack trip.
- Michael Page of Watchung, New Jersey, attended Philmont and founded Talking Pages, Inc., an online library of audio books for the visually impaired.
- Eagle Scout Dustin Murray of Woodland, California, wrote, "Service for others is easy; motivating others to serve is the challenge."
- Jeffrey Jones of Merriam, Kansas, spent a week camping and performing service projects at Camp Naish.
- Chase Pattillo volunteered with Troop 6 in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and hiked 85 miles at Philmont.
- Grant Pendleton of Colorado Springs, Colorado, worked with Angel Fire, placing cell phones into the hands of domestic abuse victims and canoed at Northern Tier.
- Eagle Scout Andrew Jasper of Leetsdale, Pennsylvania, volunteered with BSA in food drives, environmental projects and honor guards.
- Michael Grogan of Chesterfield, Missouri, worked on ten different Eagle Scout Projects, completed JLT, the Order of the Arrow National Leadership Seminar and spent 24 nights camping at Philmont.
- Leesport, Pennsylvania's Eagle Scout Ryan M. Hannahoe, who has been featured in Newsweek, CNN, AOL, AP and the Discovery Channel, completed his Eagle Scout project refurbishing an astronomy observatory

Following the ceremony was a reception of international appetizers with an orchestra and 400 peach colored long-stemmed roses. I spent most of the reception meeting Boy Scouts from around the country, who recognized me from U.S. Senator Craig's kind introduction. Although 43 medalists listed Boy Scouts as an affiliation, others introduced themselves, telling me that they had earned the rank of Eagle, but did not list their affiliation with BSA.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION REGARDING THE AWARD (from the website www.congressionalaward.org):

The Congressional Award was established in 1979 as the only program of its kind officially designated by an Act of Congress of the United States. It was modeled after the Duke of Edinburgh Program from Great Britain. The Congressional Award the highest award for youth legislated and presented by the United States Congress. It is available to young men and women between the ages of 14 and 24 for commitment and dedication to public service, physical fitness and personal growth. In addition to consistent development in the aforementioned areas, each candidate must embark upon an expedition or exploration to learn more about him/herself and/or the world in which he/she lives.

The Mission...

The Congressional Award is a public partnership created by Congress to promote and recognize achievement, initiative, and service in America's youth. The Congressional Award provides a unique opportunity for young people to set and achieve personally challenging goals that build character and foster community service, personal development, and citizenship.

International Ties....

The Congressional Award is similar to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which began in 1957 in the United Kingdom. Since then, over 60 countries have formed Award programs similar to The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Each program, operating under a variety of titles, is somewhat unique - although they all retain the same fundamental aims and philosophy. In 1988 all the National Award Programs joined together to form a non-executive body called the International Award Association to coordinate, encourage and promote the Award scheme throughout the world. The Association is serviced by the International Secretariat which is based in London.

The Award is known by different names, depending on where it is operated: The Duke of Edinburgh's Award: Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Canada, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Falkland Islands, Fiji, Gibraltar, Grenada, Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Montserrat, New Zealand, Pakistan, St Lucia, St Helena & Dependencies, St Vincent, Solomon Islands, United Kingdom. The President's Award: The Gambia, Republic of Ireland, Kenya, Malta, Trinidad and Tobago, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe. The Congressional Award: United States of America. The Crown Prince Award: Jordan. Head of State Award: Ghana. The National Youth

Award: Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka. The National Youth Achievement Award: Singapore. The Namibia Youth Award. Le Merite International de la Jeunesse: Benin, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Comores, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea. The Nigerian National Youth Award. Premio la Jeunesse: Senegal. The Source of the Nile Award: Uganda. Ordre National du Merite de la Jeunesse: Cameroon. The Benelux Award: Belgium, The Netherlands. Ardikarsa Nugraha Cestita: Indonesia. The Gold Shield Award: South Africa. The Israel Youth Award. The Premier's Award: Malaysia. The Prince Makhosini Award: Swaziland.

The Congressional Award is a public-private partnership created by Congress to provide a unique opportunity for young people ages 14-23 to set and achieve personally challenging goals that build character and foster community service, personal development, and citizenship. Established in 1979 under Public Law 96-114, the Congressional Award Foundation does not receive any federal funding. All funds necessary to run the program come from the private sector.

The Congressional Award is non-competitive and open to all young Americans regardless of mental or physical challenges, or socioeconomic status. It is the first and only award for youth legislated by the U. S. Congress. Through this award, the U.S. Congress looks to honor and encourage volunteer public service and recognize the unsung and important accomplishments of young Americans throughout the United States.

The Program....

The Congressional Award Program is about challenge. The Award offers young people the opportunity to set a personal goal and achieve it. Along the way, you will learn about yourself and about qualities like responsibility, trust and the ability to plan and organize. There are six levels of Award -- Bronze, Silver, and Gold Certificates and Bronze, Silver, and Gold Medals. Each level is cumulative -- this means time spent on one award is carried with you to the next level. Start today!

Medal Level			
Min. Hours per Program Area	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Voluntary Public Service	100	200	400
Personal Development	50	100	200
Physical Fitness	50	100	200
Expedition/Exploration	1 overnight	2 consecutive overnights	4 consecutive overnights
Min. Total Hours	200	400	800
Min. Time to Earn the Award	7 months	12 months	24 months

*The minimum age to register is 13½ and you must accomplish your goals by your 24th birthday.