

Free Spirit Award & Conference

Dream. Dare. Do.



Al Neuharth, Bob Schieffer stand at center of 2007 Free Spirit Journalism Scholars.



Bob Schieffer and Al Neuharth during 2007 conference.

The 2008 Free Spirit Journalism Scholars on a stairway in the Newseum. ►



AI Neuharth Free Spirit Scholarship and Journalism Conference

“This conference was not just about becoming a better journalist; it was about following dreams and aspirations to become the free spirit that can make a change in the world.”

That’s how Liz Wagner of Slatington, Pa., described the 2007 AI Neuharth Free Spirit Scholarship and Journalism Conference, a Freedom Forum-funded program that brings 102 high school seniors from across the USA — a boy and girl from every state and the District of Columbia — to Washington, D.C.

More than 800 students competed for the winning slots through essays, recommendations and journalism-related activities. “The winning scholars represented the top echelon of journalism students across the USA — an incredibly talented, impressive and free-spirited group,” said Chris Wells, Freedom Forum senior vice president and manager of the program.

“Students came from different backgrounds, different faiths, different economic levels, and yet we all had so much in common: a passion for journalism that was fueled throughout the week,” said Eric Webb, of Austin, Texas.

Jamie Dittmar of Wausau, Wis., added: “Before our eyes famous figures ... like Tim Russert and Bob Schieffer became real, tangible people dedicated and passionate about journalism in the present, but also intent on teaching us — journalists of the future.”

At the 2007 conference, two top students were selected to receive \$50,000 college scholarships: Tracy Pfeiffer, a senior at Cascia Hall Preparatory School in Tulsa, Okla., and Isaac Arnsdorf, a senior at Montgomery Blair High School in



NBC News Washington bureau chief Tim Russert gives Free Spirit Scholars an inside look at ‘Meet the Press’ during the 2007 conference. Russert died June 13, 2008.

Silver Spring, Md. Each of the other 100 students received a \$1,000 scholarship.

In 2008, the top scholarships went to Christopher Miller of Clarke Central High School in Athens, Ga., and Natalia Ledford of Lincoln (Neb.) High School.

“I went to the conference expecting to grow as a journalist; I left with 101 friends who continue to accomplish this every day,” said 2008 scholar Lexie Krell of Palmer, Alaska.

Free spirit of the year

Bob Schieffer, chief Washington correspondent for CBS News and host of “Face the Nation,” was named the 2007 Free Spirit of the Year. Schieffer was selected for his free-spirited achievements in the field of journalism.

Schieffer has covered Washington for CBS News for more than 30 years and served as the moderator of “Face the Nation” since 1991. He is one of the few broadcast or print

journalists to have covered all four major beats in the nation’s capital: the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department and Capitol Hill.

“This award celebrates Schieffer’s distinguished career,” said Charles L. Overby, chairman, chief executive officer and president of the Freedom Forum. “During a career spanning nearly 50 years, his outstanding work has helped to set the standard for quality journalism.”

Each year the Freedom Forum honors an individual for accomplishments that reflect the human capacity to dream, dare, do. The honoree is presented the award at a ceremony during the Free Spirit conference.

Cathie Black, president of Hearst Magazines, was named the 2008 Free Spirit of the Year. A pioneer in her field, Black was selected for her free-spirited achievements in the journalism and publishing industries. She holds the distinction as the first female publisher of a weekly consumer magazine.



From left: Tracy Pfeiffer, AI Neuharth, Isaac Arnsdorf, 2007.