



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ACHIEVEMENT

Our History

What Is the Academy?

The American Academy of Achievement is unlike any other organization in the world. For more than 50 years, this unique nonprofit foundation has sparked the imaginations of young people across America and around the globe by bringing them into direct personal contact with the preeminent leaders of our times.

The American Academy of Achievement was founded by Brian Blaine Reynolds, an acclaimed photographer best known for his contributions to Life magazine and Sports Illustrated. Reynolds established the Academy of Achievement to bring aspiring young people together with real-life heroes — the kind of achievers he met every week on assignment. The Academy's first annual Banquet of the Golden Plate program was held at Monterey, California in September of 1961.



President Bill Clinton speaking to Academy delegates at the 2002 International Achievement Summit in Dublin.

The Academy's annual gatherings transfer knowledge, inspiration and the benefit of extraordinary life history from one generation of established achievers to the next generation of young people, who will in turn become leaders in their respective fields.

The Academy has provided thousands of outstanding young scholars, scientists and social entrepreneurs with all-expense-paid life-changing experiences, through which the rising generations whose dreams will determine our collective tomorrow have drawn inspiration from those individuals who have shaped our world of today.



President Ronald W. Reagan addresses the Academy of Achievement delegates at the 1990 Summit in Chicago.

Since 1961, these generation-spanning forums have allowed exceptional young scholars to interact one-on-one with Pulitzer and Nobel Prize-winners in the arts and sciences, public servants, explorers, humanitarians, champion athletes, entrepreneurs, entertainers, and countless others who represent achievement in their respective fields. Such personal encounters send an enormously powerful message to young people raised in a world that so often values the superficial and ephemeral over the monumental and enduring.

These gatherings take on special significance in light of our vastly changing world. The opportunity for students of various lands and faiths to enter into meaningful, reasoned dialogue with eminent leaders from diverse fields ignites hope for the future. Without greater understanding between nations, there can be no lasting peace, and this kind of intellectual discourse between individual leaders, both present and future, is essential to establishing such an understanding.



President George H.W. Bush, Golden Plate awardee, meets delegates at the 1995 Summit in Colonial Williamsburg.

In this spirit, the Academy has established the International Achievement Summit, as well as programs such as Achievement TV and the Museum of Achievement, located in Washington, D.C. The biographies, interviews, symposiums, podcasts, and photographs presented on the Academy's website, www.achievement.org, have been compiled from the Academy of Achievement's exclusive collection of interviews. The Academy has developed a comprehensive video archive of historical figures, weaving their stories into a unique narrative history of our world. While we believe that everyone can benefit

by exploring the lives of these extraordinary leaders, visionaries, and pioneers, we encourage students in particular to draw on these materials while forming their own judgments and values. We encourage all to study these unique figures from our common heritage, and to discover how their inspirational life stories can be used to create roadmaps to our own successful destinations.

The International Achievement Summit



President Barack Obama addresses the delegates at the 46th annual Achievement Summit in Washington, D.C.

The Academy of Achievement held its first annual International Achievement Summit in 1999. The forum gives exceptional scholars from around the world the opportunity to interact with preeminent achievers. The Academy invites leaders in diverse fields of endeavor to attend the Summit and participate in a series of symposiums and roundtable discussions.

Approximately 80 men and women — 50 distinguished previous awardees and 30 new honorees — interact with 100 delegates — graduate students, research fellows, scholars, young scientists, physicians and social entrepreneurs — over the course of several days in an informal setting.

The Academy's Golden Plate Awards Council, comprised of past honorees of the Academy, annually reviews a broad spectrum of candidates for invitation to the Summit. From this list, the Awards Council selects 30 new Academy honorees.

The highlight of the annual International Achievement Summit occurs on the final evening of the gathering at the Banquet of the Golden Plate. At the ceremony, each honoree is presented

The American Dream on the International Stage

with the Golden Plate Award and the Academy of Achievement gold medal as a “representative of the many who excel” in their chosen professions.

The Academy of Achievement launched its series of International Achievement Summits at Budapest, Hungary in June of 1999, in conjunction with the NATO conference hosted by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

The International Achievement Summit can best be described as a global celebration of the human spirit to excel that lies at the heart of the American Dream.

Its honored guests are those who have made a significant difference in today’s world through individual effort in their own fields of endeavor. The roster of Academy members reads like a “Who’s Who” of achievement, and includes many Nobel, Pulitzer, National Medal of Science, Business Hall of Fame, Presidential Medal of Freedom, Grammy, Emmy, and Oscar winners.

A sense of electricity grows throughout the program, as the delegates — through direct personal contact with past and present Academy honorees — are reminded of the shared history of human progress, and of the common heritage of individual leadership and initiative, which know no national boundaries. Similarly, the honorees draw inspiration from the promise represented by the young delegates. Generational and cultural barriers fade away as participants join in the spirit of the occasion, a celebration of the individual’s power to shape our world.

Academy members and delegates alike come away revitalized, with a new sense of purpose. Past Academy participants from all walks of life have echoed the sentiments of General Colin



President Jimmy Carter addresses the assemblage of Academy members and student delegates during the 1984 “Salute to Excellence” program at the historic Lafayette Club outside of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Powell, who described it as “...one of the most inspiring and gratifying occasions in my lifetime of occasions.”

Who Chooses the Honorees?



Awards Council member, President Gerald R. Ford, presents the Golden Plate Award to Elizabeth Taylor, recipient of two Oscars for Best Actress, at the American Academy of Achievement’s 1985 ceremonies in Denver, Colorado.

The Academy’s Golden Plate Awards Council annually reviews a broad spectrum of candidates who are inspiring “exemplars of excellence” for possible invitation to the International Achievement Summit. From this list, the Awards Council — comprised of eminent past honorees of the Academy — selects 30 new honorees. Fifty illustrious previous awardees join the new honorees at the Summit, and participate in the awards presentation at the Banquet of the Golden Plate ceremony.

The Golden Plate Awardees

The following is a partial list of Golden Plate honorees. These visionaries and pioneers — whose ideas and talents have influenced the world — have all participated in the annual International Achievement Summit and addressed the student delegates. They are listed with the year of their induction into the Academy. A more comprehensive Summary of Golden Plate recipients, grouped by decade and field of endeavor, is also available.

U.S. Presidents

2007	Barack Obama	44th President of the United States
2002	William J. Clinton	42nd President of the United States
1995	George H.W. Bush	41st President of the United States

1990	Ronald W. Reagan	40th President of the United States
1984	Jimmy Carter	39th President of the United States
1971	Gerald R. Ford	38th President of the United States

Public Servants

2012	Sonia Sotomayor	Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court
2005	Anthony M. Kennedy	Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court
2003	Hillary Clinton	Former U.S. Secretary of State
2002	Henry A. Kissinger	Nobel Prize for Peace
1998	James A. Baker III	Presidential Medal of Freedom
1995	Ruth Bader Ginsburg	Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court
1988	General Colin L. Powell	Former U.S. Secretary of State
1987	Sandra Day O'Connor	Supreme Court of the United States
1977	Lt. Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, USAF	Medal of Honor
1961	Gen. Douglas MacArthur, USA	Congressional Gold Medal

World Leaders

2004	H.M. King Abdullah	King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
2004	H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	President of the Republic of Turkey
2003	Shimon Peres	Nobel Prize for Peace
2000	Benazir Bhutto	Former Prime Minister of Pakistan
2000	Mikhail S. Gorbachev	Nobel Prize for Peace
2000	Lech Walesa	Nobel Prize for Peace

Champions of Human Rights

2004	Congressman John R. Lewis	Champion of Civil Rights
1997	Coretta Scott King	Pioneer of Civil Rights
2003	Archbishop Desmond Tutu	Nobel Prize for Peace
1996	Elie Wiesel	Nobel Prize for Peace
1995	Rosa Parks	Pioneer of Civil Rights
1978	Frank M. Johnson, Jr.	Presidential Medal of Freedom

Innovators in Information Technology

2007	Sir Timothy Berners-Lee	Father of the World Wide Web
2004	Sergey Brin and Larry Page	Co-founders, Google Inc.
2001	Jeffrey P. Bezos	Founder and CEO, Amazon.com

1997	Larry J. Ellison	Founder and CEO, Oracle Corporation
1992	William H. Gates III	Co-Chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
1983	Rear Adm. Grace Murray Hopper, USN	Developer of COBOL Computer Language
1982	Steven P. Jobs	Co-Founder, Apple Computer
1981	William R. Hewlett	Co-Founder, Hewlett-Packard Co.
1970	Jack S. Kilby	Inventor of the Integrated Circuit
1967	Claude E. Shannon, Ph.D.	Electronics and Mathematics

Business Leaders

2004	Michael R. Bloomberg	Former Mayor of New York City
1999	Stephen A. Schwarzman	Chairman and CEO, The Blackstone Group
1994	Carlos Slim Helú	Financier and Philanthropist
1989	Philip H. Knight	Co-Founder and Chairman, Nike, Inc.
1989	Oprah Winfrey	Entertainment Executive
1987	Henry R. Kravis	Financier and Investor
1984	Robert Edward (Ted) Turner	Founder, Cable News Network
1977	John D. MacArthur	Insurance Entrepreneur
1976	Stephen D. Bechtel, Sr.	International Construction
1973	Ray A. Kroc	McDonald's Restaurants
1972	Akio Morita	President, Sony Corporation

Sports Heroes

2007	Peyton Manning	Super Bowl Champion Quarterback
2000	Sir Roger Bannister	Track and Field Legend
1990	Michael Jordan	Basketball's "Most Valuable Player"
1986	Muhammad Ali	Boxing Champion of the World
1982	Wayne Gretzky	Hockey's Scoring Champion
1979	Paul (Bear) Bryant	Collegiate Football Coach
1977	Hank Aaron	Baseball Immortal
1976	John Wooden	Basketball's Coaching Legend
1975	Willie Mays	Baseball Hall of Fame
1969	Mickey Mantle	Baseball Hall of Fame

Cinema and the Performing Arts

2014	Sidney Poitier	Oscar for Best Actor
2005	Itzhak Perlman	Virtuoso of the Violin
2005	Stephen Sondheim	Award-winning Composer and Lyricist
2004	Dame Julie Andrews	Stage and Screen Actress
2003	Bob Dylan	Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
1999	Aretha Franklin	Queen of Soul
1992	Barbra Streisand	Singer, Actress and Director
1991	Dizzy Gillespie	Master Trumpeter
1991	Audrey Hepburn	Film Actress and Ambassador
1989	George Lucas	Creator of "Star Wars"
1988	Johnny Cash	Country Music Legend
1986	Steven Spielberg	Master Filmmaker
1985	Elizabeth Taylor	Two Oscars for Best Actress
1980	Clint Eastwood	Motion Picture Production
1975	Ray Charles	Musician and Vocalist
1974	Jimmy Stewart	Legendary Film Actor
1972	Helen Hayes	Film and Stage Actress
1970	John Wayne	Legend of the Silver Screen

Authors

2009	Nadine Gordimer	Nobel Prize in Literature
2009	Wole Soyinka	Nobel Prize in Literature
2005	Edward Albee	Three Pulitzer Prizes for Drama
2005	Toni Morrison	Nobel Prize for Literature
1988	August Wilson	Pulitzer Prize for Drama
1986	Herman Wouk	Pulitzer Prize for Fiction
1977	Alex Haley	Author of "Roots"
1971	James A. Michener	Pulitzer Prize-winning Novelist

Artists and Architects

2014	Jeff Koons	Contemporary Art Phenomenon
1995	Frank O. Gehry	Architecture Gold Medal
1991	Philip Johnson	Dean of American Architects

1986	Robert Rauschenberg	Internationally Honored Artist
1977	R. Buckminster Fuller	Inventor of the Geodesic Dome
1971	Louis I. Kahn	Architecture
1961	Thomas Hart Benton	Painter and Muralist
1961	Yousuf Karsh	Portrait Photography

Scientists

1987	John Bardeen, Ph.D.	Two Nobel Prizes in Physics
1987	Francis H.C. Crick, Ph.D.	Nobel Prize in Medicine
1986	James D. Watson, Ph.D.	Discoverer of the DNA Molecule
1979	Linus Pauling, Ph.D.	Nobel Prizes in Chemistry and Peace
1975	Wernher von Braun, Ph.D.	Rocket Engineer
1976	Jonas Salk, M.D.	Developer of the Polio Vaccine
1972	Glenn T. Seaborg, Ph.D.	Discoverer of Plutonium
1971	Norman E. Borlaug, Ph.D.	Nobel Prize for Peace
1969	Charles H. Townes, Ph.D.	Inventor of the Maser and Laser
1966	Harold C. Urey, Ph.D.	Nobel Prize in Chemistry
1961	Charles Stark Draper, Ph.D.	Aeronautics and Engineering
1961	Clarence L. (Kelly) Johnson	Aviation Research
1961	Edward Teller, Ph.D.	Father of the Hydrogen Bomb

Explorers

2004	Sally Ride, Ph.D.	First American Woman in Space
1987	Dame Jane Goodall	Primatologist and Anthropologist
1981	Admiral Alan Shepard, Jr.	First American in Space
1974	General Chuck Yeager	First Man to Break the Sound Barrier
1973	Neil Armstrong	First Man on the Moon
1973	Sir Edmund Hillary	Conqueror of Mount Everest
1968	Cpt. James A. Lovell, Jr., USN	Conquest of Space
1964	Col. John H. Glenn, USMC	First American to Orbit the Earth

The Academy Honor Delegates



International student delegates of the American Academy of Achievement at the United States Supreme Court after a dinner hosted by Awards Council members Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The outstanding scholars, scientists and social entrepreneurs selected to attend the International Achievement Summit are chosen from among the most distinguished young people in the world. The graduate student attendees are selected through a roster of prestigious international fellowship and scholarship programs, such as the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Medical Research Fellowship, the Rhodes Scholarship Trust, the Truman Scholarship Foundation, White House Fellows Program, the Paul and Daisy Soros Foundation Fellowship, the Marshall Scholarship, Gates Cambridge Fellowship, and the Catherine B. Reynolds Foundation Fellowship Program for Social Entrepreneurship. The faculty of colleges and universities around the world also nominate student delegates for the International Achievement Summit. The student delegates have distinguished themselves not only in their academic or artistic pursuits, but also in their record of service to their schools and communities as well as to various international charitable organizations. Their interests span the full spectrum, from the sciences to law, medicine, the humanities and entrepreneurship. In addition, the Academy of Achievement invites several student delegates who have demonstrated great promise in the performing arts to participate in the Summit activities.



Awards Council member Justice Anthony M. Kennedy addresses the Academy delegates at the Supreme Court.

Who Governs the Academy?

The Board of Directors, composed of Patrons of the Academy and representatives of the Awards Council, oversees all financial aspects of the Academy's operation. Each year, the Academy's Board of Directors reviews — and considers for its approval — a detailed budget. Additionally, an annual independent audit is presented to the entire Board.

Who Sponsors the Academy?

The principal underwriter of the American Academy of Achievement's International Achievement Summit is The Catherine B. Reynolds Foundation. The Foundation, which has sponsored the International Achievement Summit since its inaugural gathering in Budapest, has also generously provided funding for a number of other Academy educational initiatives, including this website. A more complete listing of Academy Patrons and sponsors may be found on this website.

NonProfit Status & Deductibility of Contributions

The Academy is a nonprofit organization within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. All contributions to the Endowment Fund and to the Academy itself are tax-deductible under federal law.



U.S. Senators John McCain, Hillary Clinton and Trent Lott receive their Academy Gold Medals at the 2003 Summit.

The Achievement Television Network

The lives of legendary achievers have endlessly fascinated the public. We marvel at George Washington's selfless commitment to his country, Thomas Edison's vision, Helen Keller's courage. Such heights, young people often believe, could only have been scaled by someone of unparalleled genius, or persons born to privilege, or those favored by sheer luck. However, the lives and words of these heroes reveal a different story. Few were born rich. They were no more lucky or unlucky than their contemporaries. They were individuals like us, beset by the same challenges that human beings have faced throughout the ages. Their greatness lies not in accidents of birth or good fortune, but in how they met and overcame the extraordinary challenges they faced in their own lives.

Founded on the belief that great achievers can motivate and educate others by serving as inspiring role models, Achievement TV introduces a revolutionary concept by bringing individuals who have shaped the history of our time directly into the classroom. Achievement TV is an electronic forum that allows students to meet and learn from the outstanding visionaries and leaders of the last half-century. In their own words, these famous achievers tell of their experiences, struggles, dreams and personal paths to success, and engage in a unique, lively and innovative dialogue with the young people before whom each show was taped. All students, from those deemed "at-risk" to those in advanced placement classes, can discover heroes whose words and deeds will encourage them to strive for excellence in their studies and in their lives. Achievement TV programs are broadcast on numerous educational channels.



Awards Council member General Colin L. Powell at the 1991 Banquet of the Golden Plate ceremonies in New York City with Academy of Achievement inductees: fashion designer Oscar de la Renta and journalist Barbara Walters.

Museum of the American Dream

The American Academy of Achievement has created a museum in Washington, D.C. featuring interactive, multimedia displays telling the life stories of many of the Academy's members and their personal paths to success. Drawing upon its archives of exclusive, first-person source material, amassed over the past five decades, the Academy has created an exciting and unique exhibition.

Through state-of-the-art technology, visitors are brought into contact with the Academy honorees who have helped shape our times. In their own words, these leaders and visionaries share the path to their achievements, as well as candid insights into their own personal and professional lives. The contributions of these individuals to humanity's progress during the past century, and their spirit of innovation and ingenuity, will be preserved in the Academy's museum to inspire the creative thinking of future generations.

Online Resources



Music impresario and Golden Plate Awards Council member Quincy Jones inducts famed musician and activist Bono into the Academy during the introductory dinner of the 2002 International Achievement Summit in Dublin.

The one-on-one video interviews of more than 200 Academy honorees are featured on the Academy of Achievement's website, www.achievement.org, alongside multimedia curriculum modules and a podcast center of selected symposium presentations from the annual International Achievement Summit. The website also hosts a collection of biographies and historic photographs of these Academy members. Visitors can access our online library and discover which books influenced the early lives of our honorees. The curriculum module topics feature Academy members talking to students about their personal insights and life experiences on a wide range of topics, including civil rights, social advocacy, creative writing and leadership. The Academy of Achievement's website receives 200 million hits per year from educators and students around the world. Our mission is to bring the personal stories of exceptional men and women to all who aspire to make a difference in their own lives.

In 2011, the Academy of Achievement published a library of more than 500 exclusive audio and video symposium presentations from its annual Summits on iTunes U. The Academy has continued to add to this collection, which now spans more than 30 years, from 1981 to 2014. Academy of Achievement podcasts are available to the public on iTunes U, free of charge, under the Creative Commons License.

The Academy in the News



Honorable John J. Sirica, Watergate trial judge and Time magazine's Man of the Year, with General Dan Shomron, paratroop commander of the Entebbe Airport rescue of 103 high-jacked hostages and later the chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, on the headtable at the 1977 Banquet of the Golden Plate ceremonies in Orlando, Florida.

Learn more about the Academy of Achievement in these stories from domestic and international news media:

[Washington Post, October 28, 2012](#)

[Chicago Tribune, June 14, 2004](#)

[CBS 60 Minutes, August 21, 2003](#)

[Washington Post, May 4, 2003](#)

[Irish Times, June 3, 2002](#)

[San Antonio Express, May 5, 2001](#)

[Wall Street Journal, July 23, 1999](#)

[Great Falls Tribune, June 27, 1993](#)

[Las Vegas Review-Journal, June 28, 1992](#)

[San Francisco Chronicle, June 26, 1989](#)

[Arizona Republic, June 27, 1987](#)

[Coronado Journal, July 14, 1983](#)

[Washington Post, July 13, 1982](#)

[Los Angeles Times, July 16, 1980](#)

[Salt Lake Tribune, June 24, 1979](#)

[The Kentucky Press, June 24, 1978](#)

[Washington Post, June 27, 1977](#)

[Sunday Courier & Press, June 29, 1975](#)

[Dallas Morning News, June 25, 1970](#)

[Dallas Morning News, June 16, 1968](#)

[Monterey Peninsula Herald, September 11, 1961](#)