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# LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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## **Idaho's Outstanding Youth** **by Senator Larry Craig**

*To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream, not only plan,  
but also believe.*

**Anatole France, Nobel Prize for Literature, 1921**

This past week, accomplished young men and women descended upon our nation's Capitol to receive their Congressional Gold Awards. As one of the founders of this program in Idaho, it holds a special place in my heart. It has come a long way since 1993, when former Senator Dirk Kempthorne and I introduced it to the youth of Idaho.

The Congressional Award was created by the U.S. Congress in 1979 and was modeled on Great Britain's Duke of Edinburgh Award. It focuses on personal development through community service, physical fitness, and exploration. For the past 15 years, I have promoted and worked with volunteers to ensure that this valuable program continues to serve young Idahoans. My office works with more than a hundred high schools in Idaho, and currently, some two thousand students are involved in this program in the Gem State.

The Congressional Award is a phenomenal program that all Idaho youth should consider participating in. It is a nonpartisan, non-competitive, character-building program that encourages young people to be active, contributing members to their communities, be good citizens, and learn valuable goal-setting skills. It goes far beyond other award programs, because ultimately, participants leave with far more than a medal. They take with them priceless life lessons learned through the arduous process each recipient must undergo in order to receive recognition on various levels.

This year, I met five of Idaho's ten gold medal recipients in Washington, DC. I always make it a priority to help recognize awardees, not only at the national ceremony in DC, but also at the local ceremonies in Twin Falls and Boise. It is inspiring to hear about the tasks they've accomplished to fulfill the 400 hours of service they must perform to receive their medal. For example, this year's recipient Amanda McGeehee from Ahsahka

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worked with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game setting up displays and collecting pathology samples from wild trout. McKay Nield of Kimberly produced and directed a musical within his high school. Boise resident Anna Sali composed, performed, and recorded a self-titled CD. Mara Truslow, also from Boise, created a publication about cancer for teens, and started a newspaper for her high school. Brittany Ward of Twin Falls helped provide meals to the elderly residents of an assisted living center.

This year’s gold medal recipients join a line of Idahoans whose contributions have resulted in almost 100,000 hours of service to their communities. In fact, the three students Governor Otter selected to receive the 2008 Governor’s Brightest Star Award are all Congressional Award recipients.

The Congressional Award Program helps to raise responsible Idahoans who have the talent and passion for serving their communities, state and country. I am proud to have helped bring this fine program to our great State and even more proud to have met so many of these remarkable young people. I look forward to hearing about what they do in the future. To learn more about this program, please visit <http://congressionalawardcouncilidaho.org/>.