

National Service Symposium

April 24, 2026 10am – 4pm Eastern Time – Arena Stage, Washington DC, and Online

9:30am **Registration Opens**

10:00am **Welcome, 2026 National Service Symposium**

This year, America celebrates its 250th birthday. Since the founding, service to others has been at the core of the American democratic experiment. As we honor service, the National Museum and Center for Service and Independent Sector are working together to inspire the future of service for the next 250 years and beyond.

Speaker: **Akilah Watkins**, Independent Sector

10:05am **Fireside Chat**

In a period of deep division, coming together to serve the community can be a powerful connector helping to bridge divides, reduce isolation, and make real change with our neighbors. Join national leaders for an opening dialogue on service, love, and the importance of shared purpose and action to bring people together as we look towards the future of a flourishing nation.

Speakers: **Brian Baird**, Founder & Executive Director, National Museum and Center for Service
Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Former Lieutenant Governor, State of Maryland

10:30am **Story of Service — Sidwell Friends (Washington DC)**

Learn about Sidwell Friends students' story of creating their Campus Museum of Service, and how it has impacted their community.

10:40am **What Does Service Look Like in Our Nation's Capital?**

Service is everywhere, even in and around the Nation's capital. Every year, day in and day out, people of all ages give their time, talent, and treasure to their communities. Whether in school, through nonprofits, or everyday acts of generosity, what does service look like in and around our community? Hear from regional leaders on what service looks like and ideas for inspiring future generations.

Moderator: **Kelly McFarland Stratman**, Executive Director, National Council for the Social Studies

Speakers: **Shreyaa Venkat**, Founder, NEST4US

Cait Leavey, Ambassador, 9/11 Day

Antoinette S. Mitchell, Ph.D, State Superintendent of Education, DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education

11:25am **Story of Service — John Lewis Leadership Program (Fairfax, VA)**

Hear how students in northern Virginia incorporated service learning and giving back locally into their school year.

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11:35am **What is the Value of Volunteer Time?**

Volunteers in the U.S. hold up the foundation of civil society. They help their neighbors, serve their communities, and provide their expertise. No matter what kind of volunteer work they do, they contribute in invaluable ways. How do we truly measure the value of volunteering? Discuss how leaders across civil society think about measuring, communicating, and lifting up all of the ways Americans serve.

Moderator: **Stanley Fontaine**, Special Assistant, Office of the President, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Speakers: **Jeffrey Moore**, Chief Strategy Officer, Independent Sector

Nathan Dietz, Research Director, Do Good Institute / University of Maryland

Antonio Tijerino, President & CEO, Hispanic Heritage Foundation

12:20pm **Lunch Break**

12:50pm **Lunchtime Fireside Chat**

Dr. Martin Luther King once said “Everybody can be great because everybody can serve”, a sentiment that rings true to today. Service experiences can be formative in shaping the path people take throughout their entire lives. However, as volunteering declines and isolation increases, opportunities for connection through service are not top of mind for different generations. Find out how we can work to expand service infrastructure and work to bridge divides and build community.

Moderator: **Mioshi Moses**, Vice President, AARP Foundation

Speakers: **Tay Moore**, Research and Policy Associate, Aspen Institute

Vanessa Diamond, Chief Global Impact and Programs Officer, Points of Light

1:30pm **250 Years of Service: Our American history**

How is the ethos of service woven into our nation's founding documents and how does service live in the lifeblood of American democracy today? Trace the trajectory of civic contribution from the Revolutionary era to the modern day with leading historians how will illustrate how active engagement sustains our constitutional framework. By examining the historical link between individual duty and national resilience, this session highlights why the American culture of service is more critical than ever for a thriving, contemporary democracy.

Moderator: **John Tyler**, General Counsel, Secretary, and Chief Ethics Officer, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation

Speakers: **Joy Kinard**, Chair, Division of Political History, National Museum of American History

Trygve Throntveit, Research Professor in Higher Education and Associate Director, Center for Economic and Civic Learning, Ball State University & National Civics Fellow, Stanford University

Deborah Sran, Senior Manager, John Lewis Leadership Program

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2:15pm **Story of Service – Chattahoochee-Flint RESA (Georgia)**

Discover how educator JoAnna Arnold brought museums of service to southeast Georgia, using the program as a tool for literacy and community connection.

2:25pm **Making Service Visible and Valued**

Service is something that unites, bridges, and has the power to transform lives and communities. Yet still, it is not often as visible nor valued as it should be. Learn from a diverse group of leaders who are amplifying the impact of engaging in service through a range of initiatives, big and small, touching every corner of the country.

Moderator: **Linda Mathes**, Chief Advisor, Bipartisan Leadership Project

Speakers: **Dr. Amir Pasic**, Dean, Indiana University Lilly School of Philanthropy

Victoria Leonhardt, Director, Communities, US + Canada Hub, Giving Tuesday

Maureen Eccleston, Chief Impact Officer, Service Year Alliance

Service is a powerful bridge that unites and transforms communities, yet its vital role in our social fabric often remains undervalued and unseen. Join a diverse group of national leaders as they discuss the importance of civic engagement and address the challenges of visibility in the field. This session explores how these changemakers are amplifying the impact of service to strengthen and connect every corner of the country.

3:10pm **Story of Service - Idaho Network for Service (Boise, ID)**

Watch a story of how local leader LeAnn Naillon is working to bridge divides and build lasting community trust in and around Boise, Idaho.

3:15pm **Closing Keynote**

In this closing address, learn from the leader of Rotary International – a global network of more than 1.2 million neighbors, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers – about how service can unite people to take action to create lasting change across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

Speaker: **John Hewko**, General Secretary and CEO, Rotary International

3:45pm **Symposium Conclusion**

Speakers: **Akilah Watkins**, Independent Sector

Brian Baird, National Museum and Center for Service

4-5:30pm **Reception**