President George H. W. Bush and the World’s Top Changemakers are Honored at Points of Light’s 25th Anniversary Tribute Event on October 20, 2015

Points of Light’s 2015 Tribute event was truly a once-in-a-lifetime gathering. It was a historic opportunity to have our founder, President George H. W. Bush, with us, as we marked a quarter-century of Points of Light’s leadership of the service movement.

“Points of Light was launched in 1990 to inspire, equip and mobilize people to take action that changes the world,” said Neil Bush, Chairman of Points of Light, “and every president since has endorsed this effort.”
More than 1,000 guests gathered at the magnificent Cullen Theater at Houston’s Wortham Center to honor President Bush and recognize some of the world’s top changemakers who are transforming their communities for the better. The Tribute took place in conjunction with Points of Light’s Conference on Volunteering and Service. Former Secretary of State James A. Baker III and Susan Baker and Ambassador Hushang Ansary and Shahla Ansary served as honorary chairs of the event. Tribute event leadership also included the National Host and Houston Hometown Event committees as well as the evening’s corporate sponsor, Toyota.

Emmy Award-winning KPRC Channel 2, NBC Affiliate Anchor Dominique Sachse emceed the event and regaled the audience with humor and charm. The night opened with the national anthem sung by celebrated Navy SEAL and recording artist, Pete Scobell.

Broadway stars and legendary hit-makers lit up the stage and attendees were enthralled with performances by Dionne Warwick, Yolanda Adams, Kristian Bush, The Midtown Men and Kenna. And, in perhaps our favorite display of friendly competition, Ms. Warwick and Ms. Adams teased each other about which one of them was the favorite of President and Mrs. Bush. Both artists shared some sweet moments about their long friendships with the Bush family.
British Prime Minister David Cameron sent a personal video tribute honoring President Bush, and his private secretary and speechwriter, Tim Kiddell, offered remarks in person. Mr. Kiddell shared that the most important way we can continue to pay tribute to President Bush in the future is to bring together the most inspiring volunteers in America and Britain. He challenged us to recognize 10,000 more “points of light” across the world and enlist five new countries to issue the Award over the next five years. Addressing President Bush, Mr. Kiddell said: “It is because of your work that today in Great Britain we are recognizing our own Daily Point of Light.”

Honoring Leaders of Service

In addition to honoring President Bush, the Tribute recognized three extraordinary leaders who have shaped the trajectory of Points of Light and the service movement. Points of Light Board Members Marian Heard and Gregg Petersmeyer presented the Points of Light Lifetime of Leadership in Service and Volunteerism Awards to Ray Chambers and Michelle Nunn. Mr. Chambers is the United Nations Special Envoy for Financing the Health Millennium Development Goals for Malaria and was the founding chairman of Points of Light. Michelle Nunn is President and CEO of Care USA and former CEO of Points of Light.

Mr. Chambers said: “President Bush was the first one to whisper to the universe, a thousand points of light.” He referred to a Gallup poll on the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals, and remarked on the prescience of the President’s vision by saying: “The only way that the world can achieve the sustainable development goals is by having one billion volunteers. One thousand Points of Light: one billion volunteers.”

In her remarks, Ms. Nunn said: “I believe that Points of Light’s vision is so powerful because it speaks to being part of something that is larger than ourselves.”
Anurag Gupta and his sister, Vasudha Gupta, of Brooklyn, New York, co-founded Be More, an organization that helps people identify and address their unconscious biases, often built on stereotypes.

Dave Kopra and Ann Drorbaugh of Olympia, Washington, have journeyed to New Orleans to rebuild homes 25 times since Hurricane Katrina decimated the Gulf Coast in 2005.

Imani Henry of Wilmington, Delaware, created 100 Men Reading, a nonprofit that matches kids in preschool and elementary school with reading buddies – local professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, who read to local children.

Will Lourcey of Fort Worth, Texas, and a generationOn Hasbro Community Action Hero, founded FROGs, or Friends Reaching Our Goals, a youth service group that raises money and holds food drives to feed the hungry in his community.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi joined us in recognizing former Senator Harris Wofford of Pennsylvania with the George W. Romney Public Service Award for a lifetime of leadership and exemplary public service.

Senator Wofford remarked how apt it was to receive the award during Points of Light’s Tribute. He said: “Romney’s special dream was a summit of all the living presidents of the United States that would demonstrate that citizen service and volunteering are not partisan matters.” Senator Wofford added that Points of Light is advancing Romney’s vision and noted how apt that a core message of Points of Light’s 2015 Conference on Volunteering and Service is “Service Unites.”

Points of Light President and CEO Tracy Hoover praised the honorees’ distinguished service, and said: “We have a remarkable legacy to build upon and tremendous momentum thanks to President Bush’s vision and the leadership of Ray, Michelle and Harris. In these three leaders, we celebrate the architects and builders of the modern-day service movement.”

To close the evening, all of the performers, honorees and special guests came together on stage for a memorable finale, singing “That’s What Friends Are For.” It was an inspiring moment to pay tribute to the past. And it served as the perfect pathway for the next 25 years of volunteerism, as we seek to reach farther and inspire billions of volunteers yet to come – multiplying “points of light” around the world.
The 2015 Tribute was part of the 25th Anniversary campaign, an ambitious $10 million fundraising initiative to expand the Daily Point of Light Award around the globe and bring greater visibility and programming to the Points of Light Monument in the nation’s capital. We are so very grateful to the many, many donors who have supported the campaign, and who have helped us raise close to $6.5 million to date. Thank you for your very generous support and leadership!

President George H. W. Bush was the first president in American history to institute a daily presidential recognition program from the White House. While in office, the President conferred 1,020 Daily Point of Light Awards to honor individual volunteers and organizations advancing the service movement. The recognition program continues to grow daily. We celebrated a special milestone in 2013, when Points of Light recognized the 5,000th Daily Point of Light Award honoree at the White House with President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama and President and Mrs. Bush.

In October 2005, President and Mrs. Bush dedicated the Points of Light Monument, the nation’s only monument that pays tribute to citizen service and volunteering. Just blocks from the White House, is a historic, one-mile walking path honoring the actions and commitments to service that have transformed our nation and the world. The Points of Light Monument has the potential to expose the next generation of service leaders to the historical role citizen service has played in the growth of our nation.

As we strive to multiply and expand “points of light” across America and the globe, we are seeking to complete our 25th Anniversary campaign. Funds raised will enable us to sustain and expand the President’s chartering vision to a new digital generation around the world – making the term “point of light” synonymous with making a difference to others through voluntary service. By investing in the Daily Point of Light Award and the Points of Light National Monument in Washington D.C., we will:

- Double the number of exceptional changemakers we honor with Daily Point of Light Awards by 2020.

- Reach 100 million people with stories of service and opportunities to take action in their own communities around the world.

- Inspire millions of students to discover their own power to make a difference.

We thank you for the many generous gifts and encourage those who have not contributed to invest in this important initiative.
"Points of light are the soul of America. They are ordinary people who reach beyond themselves to touch the lives of those in need, bringing hope and opportunity, care and friendship. By giving so generously of themselves, these remarkable individuals show us not only what is best in our heritage but what all of us are called to become."

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*As of October 30, 2015

These contributions help fuel our $10 million 25th Anniversary campaign, expanding the Daily Point of Light program, and inspiring and connecting changemakers around the world.