

FREE SPIRIT | 'DREAM. DARE. DO.'

Free-spirited journalism students in for 'one heck of a ride'

After a weeklong “whirlwind” of Washington media, meetings and monuments with fellow “journalism fanatics,” 18-year-old Karis Morrall of Belvidere, Ill., said he knew he wanted to be a journalist.

“I am on the path to journalism, and I cannot know exactly where it will take me,” Morrall wrote in the *Rockford (Ill.) Register Star*. “I am, however, certain that I am in for one heck of a ride. And I’ve got the best seat available.”

Morrall was one of 102 high school seniors — two from each state and the District of Columbia — who participated in the Al Neuharth Free Spirit Scholarship and Conference program in March in Washington, D.C. Students competed for the slots through essays, recommendations and journalism-related activities. They each received a \$1,000 college scholarship. At the conference, they met with professional journalists, learned



Al Neuharth with the 2006 Free Spirit Scholars at the National Press Club.

about free-press issues and toured major news organizations such as *USA TODAY* and NBC.

Meeting famous journalists like Helen Thomas and Tim Russert was a highlight for Kara Nesvig of Climax, Minn. “Experienced journalists lent us their wisdom [and later] we collectively salivated over the thought of working at the amazing *USA TODAY* building,” she told the *Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald*. “I never had been in a room so full of ideas.”

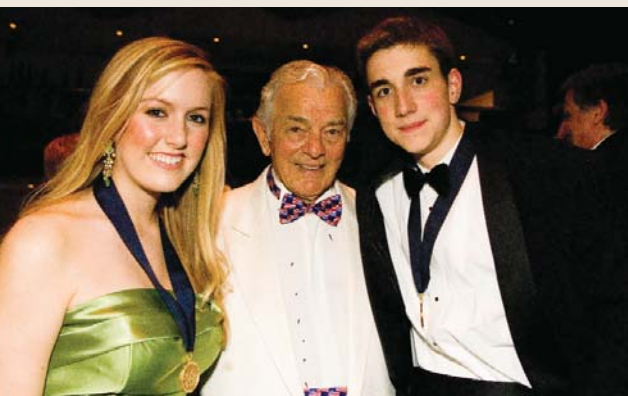
Four top students were chosen from among the 102 and awarded additional scholarships. During an awards ceremony at the National Press Club, two students were honored with scholarships of \$50,000 each: Catherine Cheney, a senior at Palos Verdes High School in Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., and Christopher Sopher, a senior at Annandale (Va.) High School.

“I don’t think I’ve ever believed in something as much as I believe in the causes of the Freedom Forum,” Cheney said. “I really hope that I can do this award justice.”

Two other seniors received \$25,000 scholarships: Rebecca Farber, Miami Palmetto Senior High, and Roman Stubbs, Great Falls (Mont.) High School.

“With such a gifted group of students and such close competition, the judges had a difficult job choosing four winners from among so many bright stars,” said Chris Wells, senior vice president in charge of the Free Spirit program.

The program was created in honor of Al Neuharth, the founder of the Freedom Forum and Newseum, to inspire “free spirited” high school students who plan to pursue a journalism career. The motto of the program is “Dream. Dare. Do.”



Flanking Al Neuharth are 2006 Free Spirit Top Scholars Catherine Cheney and Christopher Sopher, who won \$50,000 scholarships.