



PANETTA INSTITUTE

update

Annual Dinner Honors Gates, Rivlin and Blitzer for Thoughtful, Bipartisan Public Service

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Supporters of the Panetta Institute gathered in Pebble Beach on November 5 to honor three public figures for their outstanding service to the United States. Former defense secretary **Robert M. Gates**, budget policy expert **Alice M. Rivlin** and CNN lead political anchor **Wolf Blitzer** received the Institute's Jefferson-Lincoln Award at a dinner gala at the Inn at Spanish Bay.

The annual award is bestowed on public servants who reach across party lines for the good of the country and on journalists who maintain high standards of integrity in their political coverage and commentary.

"These three individuals are among the best in their professions," said Institute director Sylvia Panetta. "We salute them tonight for their dedication to democratic values and to decision-making based on the facts, not partisanship."

Gates, who served as secretary of defense from 2006 to July of this year, has held high-level national security positions under eight presidents, both Republican and Democratic. He praised the Institute for inspiring people to look beyond short-term personal gain to focus on the needs of the country.

Rivlin was recognized for her service as founding director of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, as director of the

Office of Management and Budget during the Clinton administration, as vice chair of the Federal Reserve Board, and as a member of the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles budget commission.

Citing his role as moderator of the recent "Tea Party Debate" among Republican presidential candidates, Mrs. Panetta praised Blitzer for his dedication to "balance and fairness in a media world where objective analysis too often gets drowned out by the shouting." She also noted his long career as a reporter for several news organizations, covering national and international events.

The annual dinner serves as the Institute's main fundraiser and features cuisine from some of the area's best chefs.

Inside:

- Service Learners Help Young Readers
- Student Leaders Challenged to Take the Next Step
- Research Fellow Becomes Advocate for Patients



Robert Gates, Alice Rivlin and Wolf Blitzer join Institute director Sylvia Panetta at the annual "Evening to Honor Lives of Public Service."



Service Learners at Area Schools Provide Key Assistance to Children’s Reading Program

As a junior last year at California State University, Monterey Bay, Virginia Brown volunteered for the Monterey County Reads program as part of her school’s “service learning” requirement, and the experience ignited a passion for helping children succeed. Now in her senior year, she serves as the student leader for the course that brought her to the program.

“Virginia is a shining example of a new generation of community volunteers,” says Institute director Sylvia Panetta, who has spearheaded the county-wide reading assistance effort since its inception in 1997. “And she’s a tribute to CSUMB and other area schools that have put a new emphasis on service learning in recent years.”

Working with the county’s Office of Education, along with a wide array of area colleges, businesses, military installations, faith groups and community organizations, Monterey County Reads has recruited and trained literally thousands of volunteers and placed them in local elementary schools, where they work with individual children

who are having trouble with their reading.

“There’s nothing more rewarding than helping a child learn to read,” Brown says, “and helping other service learners get involved in this program just multiplies the impact I can have for these kids.”

Reaching the Under-Served. In recent months, the Panetta Institute has placed an even greater emphasis on expanding volunteer recruitment in Salinas, the Salinas Valley and other under-served areas. The program has recruited new volunteers from the Alisal Rotary, Madonna del Sasso Church and Santa Barbara Bank & Trust in Salinas, as well as Rabobank in Gonzales.

“The schools in these areas have some of the greatest needs in our region,” says Mrs. Panetta. “The community has expressed an enthusiastic commitment to meeting these needs, and together we’re giving more of these children a chance to succeed.”

Mrs. Panetta notes that more volunteers are needed. Go to **PanettaInstitute.org** to learn how you can help.



CSUMB senior Virginia Brown went from reading volunteer to student leader of the university’s service learning course.



Salinas Alisal Rotary president Ricky Cabrera reads with a child at Sanchez Elementary School in Salinas.

Institute Offers Intensive Course in Leadership Taught by Some of America's Best Leaders

Twenty-nine elected student government officers from across California converged on the Panetta Institute in June to participate in the twelfth annual Leadership Seminar. Mostly student body presidents, they came from all twenty-three California State universities, Dominican University of California, Saint Mary's College of California and Santa Clara University.

The intensive one-week course offers invited participants an opportunity to sharpen their leadership skills, improve their understanding of government and consider a career in public service, as they engage directly with leaders from the worlds of politics, military service, business, education and other areas.

"One key to the success of this program," says Institute director Sylvia Panetta, "is the variety of speakers we involve. With fourteen different panels this year featuring a total of forty-four speakers, there had to be at least one presenter that each student could relate to and possibly emulate."

Speakers this time included former U.S. transportation secretary **Norm Mineta**, who dramatically laid out the challenges he faced in the days following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, when U.S. air transportation came to a halt and airport security had to be rapidly upgraded.

Urging the students to consider lives of public service were former California Secretary of State **Bruce McPherson** and former California Assembly members **Jim Cunneen** and **Fred Keeley**. Monterey County Supervisor **Simón Salinas** also spoke about the satisfaction of helping others, as did Santa Cruz mayor **Ryan Coonerty** and Salinas mayor **Dennis Donohue**.



Student government officers from across the state accepted the Institute's challenge to develop their leadership skills and think about public service.

Other presenters ranged from Navy Admiral **Daniel Oliver**, to Pastor **Jay Bartow**, to California Business Roundtable president **Bill Hauck** and local business leaders **Don Chapin**, **Mary Ann Leffel**, **Sherrie McCullough** and **Rhonda Williams**. Leaders from academia included UC Santa Cruz chancellor **George Blumenthal**, CSU Monterey Bay president **Dianne Harrison** and Monterey Peninsula College president **Douglas Garrison**, among others.

One of the more interesting sessions was a consensus-building exercise designed two years ago by Panetta Institute professor **Frank Hesse**. There were also new sessions this year on how to speak effectively and how to prevent harassment and bullying. Both presentations were conducted by **Dennis Hungridge**, human resources manager at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Each campus leader made a capstone presentation about his or her goals for the upcoming academic year.

The students were effusive in their praise for the experience. Courtney Seymour of Santa Clara University spoke for many when she said, "I leave here invigorated to serve others before myself."

"I LEAVE HERE INVIGORATED TO SERVE OTHERS BEFORE MYSELF."

**Courtney Seymour
Santa Clara University**





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Policy Research Fellow Returns to the Institute and Becomes an Advocate for Patients

When Sasha Sirisena arrived at the Panetta Institute as a policy research fellow in the spring of last year, she caught the attention of Institute director Sylvia Panetta for the high quality of her work, and late in the semester she was asked to do some research in the area of patient advocacy.

This topic is of particular interest to Mrs. Panetta, who is a registered nurse. Sirisena quickly demonstrated that she too had a strong commitment to quality health care and the safety and dignity of patients, and that interest appears to be influencing her future career choices.

The Institute runs its Policy Research Fellows program in cooperation with the Santa Clara University School of Law and the Monterey College of Law (MCL). Carefully selected upper-division students spend a semester assisting the Institute's director, teachers and program leaders, doing research on a wide variety of issues. Sirisena was the third MCL student accepted into the program.

When her semester as a fellow ended, she was asked to continue working with the Institute to focus on patient advocacy. She began serving as a senior fellow in August of last year while also volunteering for the Institute's annual awards dinner and other efforts.



Sasha Sirisena conducted research at the Institute on elder care and advocacy.

This September, Sirisena accepted a position at a local law firm specializing in estate and trust law. Her interest in this field, she notes, stemmed directly from the research she had done at the Institute on elder care and advocacy. She continues to volunteer here while working to become certified as an ombudsman who can advocate for patients in nursing care facilities.

"We're so proud of Sasha and what she has set out to do," says Mrs. Panetta. "Watch for great things from this aspiring public servant."

Support Our Mission

The Panetta Institute helps prepare people for lives of public service and greater civic involvement. Please help us continue this effort with your tax deductible donation.