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Treasurer's Report
 On Jan 9, 2026, the Blue Ridge Torch Club had an operating balance of \$4,773.

We wish you a perfectly Heartfelt Valentine's Day



Image downloaded from Pinterest

Coming March 10:
Hugh Sockett "Analyses of The Way We Live Now for 1975 and 2025"

BLUE RIDGE TORCH CLUB Dinner, Tuesday, February 10, 2026
Ambiance Banquet Restaurant Doors open at 5:30. Dinner at 6:00.

Page Bradley: "The Soul of a Soldier"

Last year, I finished a memoir of my father's journeys in World War II. As a young man in April 1942, he left his family's farm in Montgomery County to join the US Army. This story tells of his very early military beginnings: boot camp, pilot training, becoming an instructor, and flying bombing missions over Nazi held land.

The United States took a long time to join the wars in Europe and the Pacific, but when it did, an entire generation of men and women supported freedom and democracy in our country and the world. My dad believed in duty, responsibility, and persistence. He forged ahead through disappointment, uncertainty, and danger. He is my hero.

Ms. Bradley has a B.S. degree in Professional Communication and an MBA (with a finance concentration) from Old Dominion University. She is a member of several honor societies, including Phi Theta Kappa, the junior version of Phi Beta Kappa.

She has been a member of this Torch Club since its beginning – delivering such diverse talks as pickling, senior living communities, transportation systems in Virginia, and a fiction story she wrote about Luis the Lizard.

After 18 years at Lansdowne Woods, Page moved to Ashby Ponds with her husband Murray and their two "kitties" Clara Barton and Betsy Ross.

Menu for February Dinner. Dinner begins with an Arugula Salad with Gorgonzola cheese; Entrees are Glazed Boneless Porkchops with a brown sugar garlic sauce, or Grilled Chicken Skewers with mediterranean spices. A vegetarian dish with protein is available. Dessert will be served.

Price is \$45 for members and \$50 for guests. Please leave a check with your building representative, or a check or cash at the door. For reservations go to blueridgetorchclub.org. Click on the red icon "February 10th Meeting." The deadline for RSVP or cancellation is Thursday, February 5. Those who cancel after the deadline will be responsible for payment.

Here are the Torch talks for April and May 2026:

- April 14: Mike Leavitt, "Climate Change Skepticism"
- May 12: Joe Dockery, "The Evolution of Chiropractic Treatment"
- June 9: Annual Picnic

President's Column

I am here to report how remarkable and resilient the Blue Ridge Torch Club is. Having been a member since the Fall of 2021 (post-Covid), I have seen the Torch leadership and Club membership in action. Brenda Brohard led Torch to Belmont Country Club after we lost Skye's Restaurant. Under Dona Wolf's leadership we returned to Lansdowne Woods and the Marie de Fleur restaurant with the challenges that presented. Yet, our membership grew and our entertaining, informative, and interesting presentations continued through both administrations.

In July 2025, it was my turn to lead Torch. Having responsibility gave me a different perspective. In July we had restaurant venue and only two speakers lined up for the year, and we had Club members come forward to become officers. Crash Konwin, VP and Program Chair, scheduled a spectacular list of speakers. Plus, there are many Club Members who have expressed interest for future talks.

Fred Bishopp, Treasurer, and his wife, Peggy King, found a new restaurant for us. The Ambiance Restaurant and Banquet Hall will be our venue until a new restaurant opens at Lansdowne Woods.

Joline Matheson, Co-Treasurer, also continued her role as Membership Chair (until someone volunteers to replace her (hint, hint)). We inducted 12 new members since July and updated our membership scrolls with Torch International. Dona Wolf, Past President and Founder of this Club, has provided invaluable guidance for which I am very grateful. Jim Grefer, Secretary, continues his spectacular work as Editor of our monthly newsletter.

Club members also came forward to be dinner speakers. We have been blessed with outstanding presentations. A special thank you to Fred, Jim, and Crash for the audio visual support provided to our speakers. The presentations and speakers this season have been great, attracting strong attendance comprised of both members and guests. Club roster currently stands at 65 and is still growing.

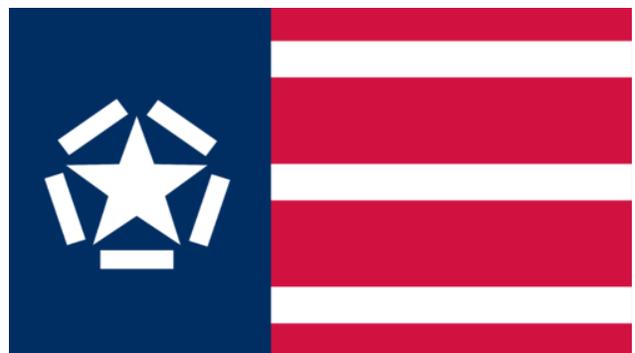
The Blue Ridge Torch Club is remarkable and our outstanding membership has made my job easy.

Thank you!!

Wayne

Torch Club Officers wish everyone a free and happy National Freedom Day

- Wayne Kaiser, President:
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- Ken "Crash" Konwin, Vice President:
kkonwin@aol.com
- Jim Grefer, Secretary/Newsletter Editor:
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- Fred Bishopp, Co-Treasurer:
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- Joline Matheson, Co-Treasurer:
jnjmat@gmail.com
- Dona Wolf, Past President: donawolf@aol.com



Virginia War Memorial 9-11 Freedom Flag

Dave and Anne Thomas Bid Us a Fond Farewell

By Dona Wolf

At our Torch dinner on January 13, we honored and bid farewell to two of our longest and most active club members. Anne and Dave Thomas, founding members of the Blue Ridge Torch Club in 2007, are returning to the Lehigh Valley area (Bethlehem / Allentown) to be closer to their family and to their original home when both had careers at Lehigh University. Anne Thomas had joined a local Torch Club as the first female member, and was involved for several years before Dave joined.



After marrying and raising their family, the Thomases moved to Leisure World (now LWVA) in 2001 and joined the nearest Torch Club -- in Frederick, MD -- where they continued their participation for many years.

When our own Blue Ridge Torch Club was chartered in 2007, Anne and Dave were among the first to sign up, and continued their long commitment to Torch by serving in most club officer roles (president, vice president, and multiple terms as treasurer).



Dave Thomas receives his Torch Club Silver Pin

They also delivered 16 Torch Talks between them. The diversity of their topics ranged from: Dave (with 9 Talks) including Galileo; Whistler, the Artist; the Galapagos; Communism in Cuba; and the Bubonic Plague; and Anne (with 7 Talks) including Susan B. Anthony; Two Invasions – 1066 and 1944; General George Marshall; and Charleston- the Low Country, Then and Now.

Additionally, Anne served as Region 3 Representative (PA, MD, VA) to the International Association of Torch Clubs (IATC), and was a member of the Torch Magazine's editorial board. Dave also provided his services as official club photographer for many years.

In 2024, Anne received IATC's Silver Torch Pin for extraordinary service, and we were pleased to recognize Dave and present him with his own Silver Torch Pin at our January dinner.

Well-deserved and long overdue. Congratulations to both of them.

Anne and Dave Thomas have been loyal and committed Torch members for at least four decades, serving as exemplars to promote the Torch goal of enlightenment through sharing. Notwithstanding all the other contributions they have made to LWVA through a host of other community activities, they both deserve all the good luck and good fortune that life can bring them. We are so happy to have had them with

us for 20 years, but heartbroken to see them go.



Happy Trails to you, Anne and Dave!

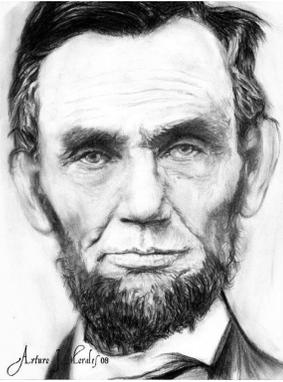
February: A Month of Celebration of American Freedom

By Jim Grefer

A defining characteristic of America is its historic and continuing struggle for freedom. We began with an eight-year battle to free ourselves from British rule and establish our own country. Eight decades later we fought another battle to free four million enslaved black Americans and save our country from splitting apart.

In the 55 years after that, American women struggled for freedom and equality in the home, the workplace, and in the halls of government. In its long, slow, *non-violent* battle, America finally acknowledged women's right to own property, to keep their wages, and finally, to vote and participate in government.

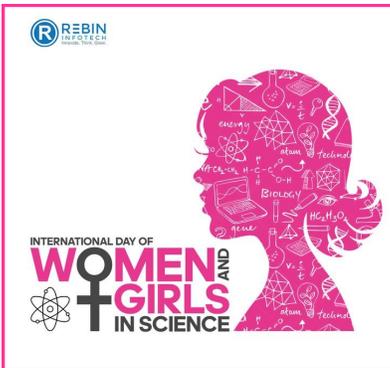
In the month of February, we celebrate America's path to freedom.



To begin, February 1 is National Freedom Day. This holiday celebrates the day Abraham Lincoln signed the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which declared that, from then on, no slavery would exist in the United States.

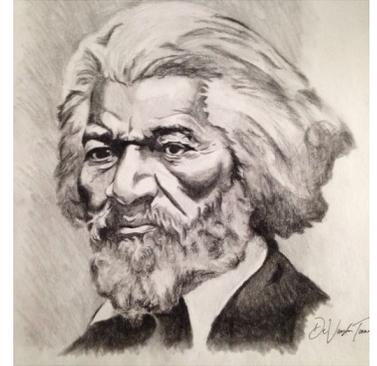
We also celebrate the birthdays of three of our great freedom warriors. February 12 is Lincoln's birthday. February 14 is the birthday of Frederick Douglas, the great orator, writer, and leader of the slavery abolitionist and civil rights movements. On February 15 is the birthday of Susan B. Anthony, also a writer and activist, who led the movement for the rights of American women which culminated in ratification of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote in all American elections.

Two February additional celebrations seek to move us in the direction of greater participation for women and girls in professional careers and in world affairs.



The first, International Day of Women and Girls in Science on Feb 11, seeks to encourage women and girls to pursue studies in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professional fields, historically bastions of and for men. The second, World Thinking Day on Feb 22, established by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) in 1926, this holiday encourages women and girls to think about problems and solutions in all countries.

It is said that America is exceptional. And it is. But this is not because we have always been faithful to our promise. It is because we have continually strived to be a more free place for everyone. We have in these February celebrations several stark reminders of the ongoing American struggle to uphold our promise of freedom for all people in America.



"We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing."

Abraham Lincoln, Speech at Sanitary Fair during the Civil War, April 18, 1864

"No man can put a chain about the ankle of his fellow man without at last finding the other end of it fastened about his own neck."

Frederick Douglass, Civil Rights Mass Speech October 12, 1888

"When... people enter into a free government, they do not barter away their natural rights; they simply pledge themselves to protect each other in the enjoyment of them..."

Susan B Anthony, Speech After Being Convicted of Illegally Voting in the 1872 Election

Current Members: January 2026

Charlene Ahmed	Lyn Green	Joyce Mitchell
Syed Ahmed	Jim Grefer	Pat Monahan
Barry Berger	Carol Hall-Veit	Elsa Moustafa
Fred Bishopp, Jr	Kenton Hamaker	Andrew Norton
Murray Bradley	Peggy Hamaker	Bill Phillips
Page Bradley	Neelam Henderson	Pat Phillips
Brenda Brohard	Wes Henderson	Memory Porter
Christine Caldwell	Kathleen Hughes	Ann Schmitt
Sheila Cramer	Fran Hurley	Catherine Shepard
Steve Creskoff	Wayne Kaiser	Hugh Sockett
Kay Curley	Maria Kelly	Dennis Spriggs
Tom Devaney	Peggy King	Anne A Thomas
Beckham Dickerson	Ken "Crash" Konwin	Anne H Thomas
Tina Dickerson	Judith Kory	Bill Thomas
Joe Dockery	Eva Leavitt	Dave Thomas
Marylyne Dockery	Michael Leavitt	George Viener
Nancy Downey	Barbara Leone	Janet Walker
Madelon Eisenberg	Joline Matheson	William Walker
Hosny El-Khordagui	Jenny Mayberry	Britt Wilford
Jerry Frola	Sam Mayberry	Terry Wilford
Joe Gibson	Doug McCollum	Dona Wolf
Rosa Gibson	Sue McCollum	

"But just to keep alive isn't enough," he said. "To live you must have sunshine and freedom and a little flower to love!"

Hans Christian Andersen "Sommerfuglen"
(The Butterfly) 1861