



Press Release

National Museum of the Surface Navy Announces 2025 Freedom of the Seas Award Recipients

SAN PEDRO, Calif. – July 1, 2025 – The [National Museum of the Surface Navy](#), founded aboard [Battleship IOWA](#) and scheduled to open in 2026, today announced the recipients of the 2025 Freedom of the Seas award honors. The Freedom of the Seas awards, which recognize the trailblazers who are inspiring the next generation through service, innovation, and leadership, will be presented at the fifth annual [Freedom of the Seas](#) Awards Dinner, which will be held aboard the historic Battleship IOWA on Saturday, Oct. 25, 2025.

The Freedom of the Seas Awards Dinner is held annually in honor of the largest naval battle of World War II, the [Battle of Leyte Gulf](#), which transformed the U.S. Navy into the force that has ensured Freedom of the Seas for the past 81 years. This year's event will celebrate [250 years of the Surface Navy](#). Attendees at the premier annual event will include top leaders from the education, veteran, community, industry, government, and military sectors.

Victor Vescovo to Receive 2025 Freedom of the Seas Award

[Victor Vescovo](#), founder of [Caladan Capital LLC](#), undersea explorer, and retired Navy officer, has been named the recipient of the 2025 Freedom of the Seas Award. The award recognizes an accomplished individual who embodies the core principles of America's Surface Navy to protect and defend our oceans for the benefit of the free world.

Among his unparalleled accomplishments as an undersea explorer, Vescovo is credited with identifying and surveying the deepest shipwrecks ever surveyed. Located in the Philippine Sea, the Fletcher-class destroyer [USS Johnston](#) (DD-557) and John C. Butler-class destroyer escort [USS Samuel B Roberts](#) (DE-413) were sunk during the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the greatest naval battle during WWII and among history's most important battles.

The future [USNS Victor Vescovo](#) (T-AGOS 26), the second in the Explorer class of [T-AGOS ocean surveillance ships](#), is named for Vescovo, who retired after 20 years of service as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

Tanya Acker to Receive 2025 VADM Gravely Leadership Award

Tanya Acker, co-host of “[Tribunal Justice](#)” on Amazon Freevee and host of “[The Tanya Acker Show](#)” podcast, has been named the recipient of the 2025 Freedom of the Seas [VADM Samuel L. Gravely, Jr.](#), Leadership Award. The VADM Gravely Award recognizes leaders who exemplify the trailblazing, courageous service of the late U.S. Surface Navy Vice Admiral.

Acker is recognized for her extraordinary leadership and the tireless dedication of her time and resources to her career as a civil litigator in the public and private sectors and on television, and to a variety of nonprofit organizations. She has been a strong advocate for America’s Surface Navy aboard the Battleship IOWA and has worked to advance the mission and vision of the National Museum of the Surface Navy. One of her most impactful and far-reaching roles is her leadership in the annual VADM Gravely student scholarship program, which preserves Admiral Gravely’s legacy while enabling academic success for future generations of Americans.

Kerri Kasem to Receive 2025 Humanitarian Service Award

Radio & TV host, activist, and speaker [Kerri Kasem](#) has been named the recipient of the 2025 Freedom of the Seas Humanitarian Service Award. This award recognizes those who exemplify the fearless bravery and tenacity necessary to navigate troubled waters to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as a core principle of America’s Surface Navy.

Kasem, the daughter of radio icon Casey Kasem, is the founder of [Kasem Cares](#) and the Kasem Coalition. The mission of Kasem Cares is to stop elder abuse through education, awareness, advocacy, community involvement, and legislative action. She is also the founder of [Facem Beauty](#), a skincare product company focused on helping customers discover the power of self-confidence through skincare.

Lockheed Martin to Receive 2025 Innovation and Exploration Award

[Lockheed Martin](#) has been named the recipient of the 2025 Freedom of the Seas Innovation and Exploration Award in recognition of the first use of AI in the Aegis Command and Decision (C&D) system deployed aboard the USS Ticonderoga (CG-47) in 1983. The Innovation and Exploration Award is presented to an individual or organization that embodies the spirit to propel society beyond its limits,

pioneering research and developing technologies that impact the knowledge and capabilities of people around the world.

“The Freedom of the Seas Awards Dinner is our opportunity to recognize and honor the outstanding contributions of individuals and organizations who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to inspire the global awareness of Freedom of the Seas,” explained retired Navy Rear Admiral Mike Shatynski, Chairman of the Board of the National Museum of the Surface Navy. “As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and Merchant Marine, we look back on how the Surface Navy has served as a pillar of strength, innovation, and peace in the world’s oceans. This year’s award recipients embody the spirit of the tenets that are critical in securing and maintaining absolute freedom to navigate the oceans.”

For information on sponsorship opportunities, contact Kyle Aube, Director of Development at kaube@labattleship.com.

About the Freedom of the Seas Awards and the National Museum of the Surface Navy

The Freedom of the Seas Awards is the premier annual event of the National Museum of the Surface Navy at the Battleship IOWA. The event is held in honor of the anniversary of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval battle in the history of the world, which occurred during World War II. After that battle, the U.S. Navy emerged as the dominant naval force at sea ensuring Freedom of the Seas throughout the world for the past 81 years. The Awards honor those who embody the core principles of the American Surface Navy’s mission to protect and defend our oceans for the benefit of the free world.

Scheduled to open 2026 aboard Battleship IOWA, which is located on the LA Waterfront at the Port of Los Angeles, the mission of the National Museum of the Surface Navy is to raise America’s awareness of the importance of the United States Surface Naval Forces’ role in international relations, free trade, humanitarian assistance, and technological innovation, not just in the past but today and into the future.

About Pacific Battleship Center

Pacific Battleship Center is an award-winning 501(c)3 nonprofit founded in 2008 to ignite curiosity, connect communities, and enhance understanding of America’s role in maritime peace and prosperity. Dedicated to connecting communities with America’s maritime history, Pacific Battleship Center welcomes over 300,000 visitors annually aboard Battleship IOWA and supports its mission through sponsorships, donations, and a dedicated crew of volunteers who donate over 60,000 hours each year. Pacific Battleship Center’s family of brands includes [Battleship IOWA](#), [National Museum of the Surface Navy](#), [Freedom of the Seas](#), [LA Fleet Week](#), [Camp Battleship](#), and [Vicky’s Doghouse Café](#).

Pacific Battleship Center has been designated as the official 501(c)3 nonprofit partner for the [Los Angeles Emergency Management Department](#) (EMD).

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