

The Recycle! Kids program is a model program for others to follow!

# THE TRUE MOUNTAIN SPIRIT

## HON. HAROLD ROGERS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 4, 1995

Mr. ROGERS. Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to read this outstanding article on welfare and the fine work of the Christian Appalachian Project in my State of Kentucky.

Groups like the Christian Appalachian Project do yeoman's work to help families in need in southern and eastern Kentucky.

They truly live by their motto, "Helping people help themselves."

I hope my friends will take the time to read this article. Not only is it a shining example of the hard work and dedication of our communities and volunteers, it provides hope for our future.

[From the Mountain Spirit, May-June 1995]

WELFARE: INVESTING IN PEOPLE

(By Margaret Gabriel)

Apparently, when Jesus told his disciples they would always have poor people in their midst, he didn't necessarily mean the same people. Recent statistics from the U.S. Census told Kentuckians that the number of people living in poverty increased between 1989 to 1993, from 16.2 to 20.4 percent. There's evidence, though, that people who participate in welfare programs are not in a stagnant pool but a revolving door.

The May 1994 editorial in St. Anthony Messenger cites statistics from the Children's Defense Fund, saying: "... half of welfare recipients are off welfare within two years. Some occasionally return to welfare depending upon job situation, but the overwhelming majority do not live a welfare 'way of life'; they use the program to get by between jobs."

Christian Appalachian Project outreach caseworker Wanda Penman is a good illustration of exactly that use of federal entitlement programs.

In 1987, Wanda, a graduate of Kentucky State University, was a single mother of one child. She and Tonceia lived in the home where Wanda had grown up and received Aid to Families with Dependent Children and food stamps. She had been working in a manufacturing job, but was forced to quit due to child care conflicts. "It was good money; I didn't have to beg to get the bills paid. When I started on welfare, I was drawing \$162 a month, plus about \$115 in food stamps. I'd had a taste of what it was like not to have to struggle with the bills, and I wanted it back, if only for a little while."

Wanda had the chance to stop that struggle for a little while, when she was offered six weeks of work at CAPRICE, CAP's training program for adults with disabilities. She took the job, even though doing so meant giving up her welfare benefits, including government-paid medical insurance for Tonceia and herself. "I'm not a person to remain idle for days on end. The life of leisure suits me for about a week. It drives me crazy to be sitting around not working," Wanda said. "I really had to think about giving up that medical card, but it was worth it."

The six-week job with CAP became a six-month job, then part-time and finally a full-time position. However, she had no insurance or Medicaid while she was pregnant with her second child, and therefore had to pay for her pre-natal care. "It took me six years to

pay off those bills. It's no wonder that people are afraid to risk losing that card. It's sad to say."

Until the fall of 1994 Connie Wagers managed CAP's Family Life Abuse Center, when she temporarily retired to take a position as a stay-at-home mom with her children, Lauren and Jonathan.

Connie's experience with welfare dates to here childhood in Knott County, when her mother was widowed with seven children at home and the eighth in college. Her daddy had been disabled in a mining accident, then died suddenly. "Mom had not worked outside the home and had very little education, so she had no choice but to go on welfare; there was no other way to feed her children."

It would have been far easier for her to continue in the system, getting welfare, food stamps and the medical card, but she firmly believed that any person who was able to work should work. It's okay to take help to get back on your feet, but not long term. She worked at whatever she could find, cleaning houses and working in the school lunch room one day a week to pay for our lunches. I washed dishes during recess, too."

Connie calls her mother her "greatest hero," and says that from her she learned the value of hard work and the importance of depending on herself. "Mom always encouraged all of us to get our education; she saw education as the key. At that time in that area, girls were not encouraged to go to college, especially if you weren't from a well-do-do-family. It was just assumed that you'd get married."

Connie says she ran in the other direction as soon as any boy broached the subject of marriage, and with the help of grants and loans—and the encouragement of her mother—she worked her way through Sue Bennett College in London and Eastern Kentucky University, earning a degree in social work.

She eventually married Jerry Wagers, who traveled with an oil company. When they decided to settle in Kentucky, a promised job fell through, and they had to sign up for food stamps for a couple of months, "until he could get another job," Connie said.

"It wasn't terribly dramatic, but I felt totally humiliated, going to the grocery store and having to buy groceries with food stamps. I had a college education and there I was with food stamps. No one ever said anything to me, but I've heard people make comments about people using food stamps. If you happen to be one of the lucky ones who's not having to use food stamps, you'll hear it. And you see the looks on faces."

Connie said that people who have been on welfare for extended periods of time feel the sting of public perception, too. "I've hear the ladies in the shelter talking about it. They would feel humiliated, like people were looking down on them."

As college graduates, Wanda and Connie have the skills needed to find jobs in an area of high unemployment. Such was not the case for Pete Laney. With the help of CAP's Community Health Advocates in Magoffin County, Pete recently attained certification as an emergency medical technician. In studying for the certificate, Pete was trained to transport people in Magoffin and surrounding counties to doctors' office and hospitals throughout the region. His wife, Wanda, is studying to complete the training, attain certification, and get a similar job. CAP met Pete and Wanda when Wanda studied to obtain her high school certification through a CAP adult education program.

A native of Magoffin County and a high school graduate, Pete supported his family in the past with seasonal farming jobs; Wanda receives an AFDC payment for a child from a previous marriage.

"What we were taking in just didn't cover it," Pete said. "We paid \$80 in rent, a \$70

electric bill, and in the winter we were out two or three hundred a month for coal. It ain't easy. People say they've got it made on welfare; I don't see how. There are people out there who would work, but you go down to the unemployment office and they'll have a list of jobs that long, but you have to have five years of experience. Now, how are you going to get a job if nobody will let you get any experience?"

Pete, too, brings up the issue of how risky it is to leave the welfare rolls for a low-paying job that does not include medical benefits. His work as an emergency medical technician pays him by the run, and when he's busy, the money's okay, he said. "That's the good side, but the medical card is gone, and I can't afford the medical bills if we were to have to go to the doctor."

When she was very young Rose Mary Bailey dropped out of school to get married. It was not a difficult decision for Rose; she said she hated school. "In the second grade they put me in special ed. I don't know why; I had straight A's in the first grade. They held me back in the first because I had missed some, so they told me I had to repeat. From that time on, I said I didn't like school. My grades decreased, my self-esteem decreased. I said what's the use of worrying about it, so I didn't."

Despite her lack of education, Rose had an ambition not often seen in dropouts, and she began working in the many fast food restaurants in her native Salyersville.

"Working in fast food is a way to get off welfare," Rose said. Rose has no children, so she was not eligible for AFDC. Her husband, too, worked a low-paying job so they were eligible for food stamps. "It wasn't enough income to live on, and I knew that if I was going to get out of this I had to get a better job. And I knew that if I was going to get anywhere I had to get an education. My friend told me there was a position at the bank and that it required a GED. That's one reason why I started working on it."

Rose began studying for her GED, through a program she saw on Kentucky Educational Television, a public broadcasting station. She worked on her own for about six months, then finished her studies through CAP's adult education program. In the fall of 1994, Rose applied for and got a job at a bank in Salyersville. "And I love it. I'm a phone operator, and I balance checkbooks, and I'm taking college level accounting courses at the bank."

Rose, a special education dropout and former food stamp recipient, has set an ambitious goal for herself. "I'm planning on going back to school. Right now, my goal at the bank is to become a loan officer, vice-president, and move on up. I'm working hard and studying to learn all I can right now. I try to pick up any information I can. I'm terrible for asking questions!"

Rose, Wanda and Connie have more than just experience working themselves off welfare in common. All spoke glowingly of the influence of their mothers, emphasizing the importance of family in shaping the values of young people.

Wanda said she felt awful about herself while she was on welfare. "But, Wanda has always been hard on Wanda. I have a college degree, and being an educated woman, it was hard for me to accept the fact that I was trying to survive on a welfare check."

"I wasn't raised in a family that lived on public assistance. My mother and father had 13 children, and I don't remember food stamps ever being in our home. What I can remember is big huge gardens that we all worked, and I can remember the variety of jobs my dad worked. When I grew up, we lived mostly off wild game and that garden. My mom took in laundry at home after

working all day at the hospital or the school. We've always been a working class family. The thought of drawing welfare didn't set well with me."

Connie learned from her mother that "It's okay to take help when you absolutely have to have it, to help you get back on your feet. But she taught me that any honest work is noble, regardless of how little it pays. We have a responsibility to help ourselves."

Rose credits her mother for encouraging her to dream dreams and achieve her goals. "She's always told me I was smart and could do anything I wanted. That helped out a lot. When I was sitting at home doing nothing she told me I could do better. If not for her I don't think I would have tried. I didn't want to let her down."

Other boosts in Rose's self-esteem came from Holly Rivers, the CAP volunteer who tutored Rose, and from other CAP workers she met. "An organization like CAP has to be made up of people who care for people who want help. I came in here and expected, like anywhere else, to find snooty people who looked down on me. I always felt everyone was looking down on me, but everyone here treated me as an equal. They were friendly, and told me I could do it. After a while I saw that I could and knew I was as good as anyone else."

Wanda, Rose, Pete and Connie agree that the welfare system needs reform, but they all expressed concern about the elimination of benefits with the start of any work rather than withdrawing them slowly.

"Supplementation is a real key to welfare reform," Connie said. "You have to encourage people to at least try. If they're working a minimum wage job—obviously not enough to support a family—at least let them keep the medical card, something that encourages them to build up some self-esteem and some pride and not be so humiliated that they're taking handouts."

Connie said that capping welfare benefits is especially unrealistic in the rural area because of the lack of jobs. "If the jobs are not there to make a living wage, what choice do you have? We've had years and years of things the way they are that discourage people from trying. It's hard for a caring parent to give up a medical card and food for the children to go out and work minimum wage." A combination of jobs, education and better pay is crucial to meaningful reform, she said.

"I worry about people, but I know there are some people on welfare that are there just to be on welfare," Rose said. "I believe if they can work, they ought to. But it bothers me to think of people that are unable to get a job. I've got a brother on welfare that's not able to work. What's he going to do? Some people are not able to work and are on welfare to get by until they can do better; it's not right not to help them."

Wanda believes that the methods of welfare reform she's heard through the news media are unrealistic. "You're not going to be able to please everybody, and whatever you do, somebody's going to suffer. My overall view is that people should be able to use welfare as long as they need to, but let it be because you need to. Like the mother with the three kids, who knows that to go out and get a job at minimum wage is not going to do it. Fine, use the system as long as you need to, but after that let's look to doing better."

HONORING DOLORES A. KUREK

## HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 4, 1995

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and memory of an educator, a mother, a wife, a devoted citizen, a woman ahead of her time, and a friend. Mrs. Dolores A. [Bodnar] Kurek. Dolores Kurek was a woman of great dedication in my community and throughout the Nation. On June 2, 1995, she passed away, much too young, at the age of 59 after a long courageous struggle with cancer. Her presence will be greatly missed by the thousands of lives she touched, and continues to touch.

Dolores Kurek was an exemplary leader in the field of science. She was the recipient of numerous awards including the engineering and math award in 1987, the exemplary women in science award, the teacher of the year award in 1991, and the Sears grant for science and engineering in 1993. However, for everyone who knew her, Dolores' greatest award was not one she received, but one she gave. Her illustrious teaching career spanned over 20 years of care, commitment, and devotion to spreading her personal love for science. Her commitment to advancing women in the sciences was unmatched. She personally organized Women in the Sciences Career Day for thousands of young women in high school throughout our region.

Even to the day of her passing, her personal quest for knowledge never faltered. Dolores Kurek was working on another Ph.D. this time in physics. She was continually learning for, and from, those around her. If the quote, "Read not to contradict and confute nor believe and take for granted, but to weigh and consider" ever had any one in mind, it might just have as well been for Dolores Kurek. She was a life-long learner.

She was a devoted wife of 38 years, a loving mother of six children, nine grandchildren, and a career educator at the high school and college level. The loss of Dolores Kurek is deeply felt throughout our community. It has been a personal gift and honor to have learned from her. I and all who knew her feel great privilege to have shared in her life and we express our gratitude for her life of dedication, commitment, and love. She will be missed.

## DOES THE RIGHT HAND KNOW WHAT THE FAR RIGHT HAND IS DOING?

## HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 4, 1995

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I have been puzzled recently by Speaker GINGRICH's actions in certain regards. In particular, he seems to me to have been engaged in flirtations with some of the more extreme, unreasonable conspiracy theories that rattle around the right wing these days—for example, his support of the manner in which the Waco hearings were conducted and his refusal to accept the conclusion of several inde-

pendent investigators that Vince Foster was a suicide. We also have the erratic way in which the House is being run these days, with important legislation being considered in the middle of the night, with debate and votes separated, and with the general sense of discombobulation.

A recent column by Robert Novak in the Washington Post suggests some of the reasons—the Speaker, having benefited greatly from the energies of the very conservative elements that helped him take control of the Republican Party now is bothered by their insistence on his paying attention to their agenda. Since Mr. Novak has long been one of the in-house historians for the right wing in America, his discussion of the Speaker's rage at those on the right, and his frustration over his inability completely to control them explains a great deal. Because I think it is useful for people to be able to understand some of the puzzling things that have been happening in the House recently, which are otherwise inexplicable, I think it very useful that Mr. Novak's article be reprinted here.

## ANGER AT THE DINNER TABLE

(By Roger D. Novak)

After spending three hours behind closed doors with the House Ethics Committee answering nuisance allegations by the Democratic leadership, Newt Gingrich last Thursday night erupted in anger at the dinner table—against his friends, not his enemies.

The speaker of the House was the guest at a dinner hosted by R. Emmett Tyrrell, editor of the American Spectator, and attended mainly by conservative journalists. The immediate cause for Gingrich's ire was my column that day suggesting that he and other Republicans were flinching on affirmative action. But his complaints were much broader.

For the first time in the 104th Congress, the speaker seemed at bay. His ill humor, his own aides said, was in no small part the product of fatigue. But beyond that, Gingrich is vexed with conservatives, inside and outside the House, who are crossing him on the highly charged issues of race and abortion. A major political leader is in grave danger when he assails his base.

Gingrich's aides, who had never seen him as out of control for so sustained a period as he was last Thursday night, attribute it to an unbelievably heavy work load. Republican colleagues in the House, at the point of exhaustion trying to enact their revolutionary program, wonder how their leader fulfills that schedule while also running a shadow campaign for president and promoting his best-selling book.

Fatigue can be cured by a little rest. Gingrich's bigger problem lies with the ideological heart of his party. His long-time supporter and sometime critic, conservative activist Paul Weyrich, worries that Gingrich is following the bad example of the Reagan White House in setting parameters of permissible conservatism.

In effect, the speaker is saying: Nobody can be to the right of me and be respectable. From the speaker's office come complaints that conservative congressmen want him to force passage of proposals that do not command a majority in the House.

At the American Spectator dinner, historian Gingrich compared the course of Republicans in Congress today to the way U.S. forces temporarily bogged down in France in 1944 after the Normandy landing. Democratic defenders of big government, he said, are fighting for their lives. This is a struggle of seven-day weeks and 16-hour days. But unlike his hero, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower,