

years Polish language classes were a standard part of the school's curriculum. Through the work of current pastor, Rev. Michael Ignaszak, and many others at St. Helen's parish, that emphasis on our Polish culture and traditions continues to flourish.

St. Helen's is known throughout its neighborhood as not just a Catholic parish and parochial school, but as an outstanding member of the community. Since 1972 St. Helen's church festival has been a highly anticipated annual event. Its monthly fish fries, run entirely by volunteers, have become a Friday night tradition.

However, St. Helen's community involvement runs far deeper than fish fries and church festivals. It has been home to Boy Scout Pack 264 since 1949. Many clubs, such as the 55 & Over Club and the Christian Women's Group volunteer their time and efforts to numerous community causes. The Human Concerns Committee works closely with the Interfaith Caregiving Network to distribute holiday gifts to the elderly and home bound in the area.

And so it is with great pleasure that I join students and parishioners, past and present, in congratulating St. Helen's on the celebration of its first 75 years, with best wishes for the next 75, and beyond.

OSHA AWARD FOR NATIONAL ENZYME

HON. ROY BLUNT

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2000

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to publicly congratulate the administrative staff and employees of National Enzyme Company in Forsyth, Missouri for their outstanding vision, dedication and effort in attaining Merit Status in OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program. This honor is conferred on less than 1% of the six million companies overseen nationwide by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The manufacturer of private label enzyme-based dietary supplements located in Missouri's Seventh Congressional District joins over 400 other businesses in our nation in participation in this program. They are only the seventh company in the state of Missouri to achieve this designation.

The award was granted after an intensive 9 month-self study by employees at all levels followed by a rigorous comprehensive review visit by OSHA inspectors who found the facility to be fully in compliance with all regulations.

According to OSHA this designation means that the health and safety practices and procedures developed by National Enzyme are models within their industry, and that the facility is preparing itself for even higher levels of health and safety compliance. In fact those inspectors noted that the program has "evolved into a comprehensive process that is an integral part of everyone's daily working procedures, which extends to all levels of the organization."

I would also point out that this outstanding achievement is the result of a cooperative effort between public and private entities rather than a unilateral regulatory effort on the part of a lone federal agency. To quote OSHA "This

concept recognizes that compliance enforcement alone can never fully achieve the objectives of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Good safety management programs that go beyond OSHA standards can protect workers more effectively than simple compliance."

National Enzyme's commitment to an ongoing program of employee safety is demonstrated by their first place award last year from the four-state Safety Council of the Ozarks for Most Effective Safety Committee.

I express my appreciation, and that of all my colleagues, to President Anthony Collier, and Manufacturing Manager Jerry Holvick for their leadership in bringing this national recognition to Forsyth, Missouri and the Seventh Congressional District.

TRANSFER OF VA FACILITY TO CUSTER COUNTY, MONTANA

HON. RICK HILL

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2000

Mr. HILL of Montana. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce this legislation in the House. An identical version, S. 2637, has been introduced in the Senate by Senators BURNS and BAUCUS of Montana. The intent of the bill is quite simple: to transfer ownership of the Veterans Hospital from the VA to Custer County, Montana. For many years, this hospital operated at full capacity to serve Montana veterans. Then, it was downgraded to a clinic. The result of this change is that the VA only uses a small part of this very large facility. Still, the VA is in charge of upkeep and maintenance of the entire structure. Until recently, there were about 100 employees and only one doctor working for area veterans. The VA estimates that this situation is costing \$500,000 per year which would be much better spent taking care of veterans rather than a building the VA no longer needs.

This situation is not unique to the VA in Miles City. It is estimated that the VA spends \$1 million dollars every day on excess properties around this country. At a time when budgets are tight and when we are having a difficult time honoring the commitments this country made to our veterans, the current situation is simply unacceptable.

What is a liability to the Veterans Administration can be an asset to the town of Miles City and Custer County. In a town of some 8,000 people, the change in the VA mission has cost the economy 145 full-time quality jobs with a \$7 million decline in payroll in just the last 6 years. For a town whose top two industries are agriculture and government jobs, that's a significant loss. The community could have, understandably, objected to the mission change. Instead, community leaders have banded together and devised a plan that works for the town, the VA and our veterans.

The community's main objective for the transfer is long-term economic development which includes: relocation of distance learning technology to a tech center site in the VA complex, development of a multi-purpose day care, work force training site, career development site, food bank distribution site, and potential office space to be rented for start-up business opportunities.

Community colleges traditionally have been recognized as key to sustainable economic

development through the training opportunities they offer. MCC is located across the street from the VA hospital. Their curriculum will benefit greatly with steady access to this facility. MCC will train individuals for today's job market, including training for tech jobs that would be included in the tech center.

The \$500,000 savings achieved annually through this transfer will be used for new outpatient clinics in rural Montana. That represents a significant benefit to our veterans who currently have to travel extraordinary distances to access the care promised them. In rural states like Montana, accessibility to health care is a very real problem and another reason that this legislation makes so much sense.

The alternative to legislative action to transfer the property is a long, laborious bureaucratic process that involves several federal agencies and that can take years to complete. That process can cost several million dollars, not to mention the continuing expense of the VA maintaining the excess property. Our approach will expedite the process, saving the VA money for veterans and, at the same time, jump-starting economic development for a town in serious trouble.

HONORING MRS. ADRIANA G. FIGUEROA OF SAN GABRIEL, CALIFORNIA, CELEBRATING HER RETIREMENT FROM 37 YEARS OF TEACHING

HON. MATTHEW G. MARTINEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2000

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, today I convey my heartfelt congratulations to Mrs. Adriana Figueroa on her retirement. Mrs. Figueroa has dedicated the last 37 years of her life to our community as a public educator, and has exemplified the best in public service.

Mrs. Figueroa was born on March 2, 1940 in Los Angeles, California, and was raised in East Los Angeles. She attended St. Alphonsus Elementary School in Los Angeles and Sacred Heart of Mary High School in Montebello. She graduated from California State University, Los Angeles with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English and Social Sciences, and after graduation, completed course work for a General Secondary California State Teaching Credential. She received her Masters in Education from Azusa Pacific University.

Her admirable career began at Alhambra High School in 1963 as a classroom English teacher teaching ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students. In 1974, she accepted a position as an Adult Basic Educator (ABE) with the Los Angeles Unified School District, teaching adults to read and write. That decision changed the direction of her career, and from that moment forward, she would make a difference by bringing literacy, high school diplomas, and vocational training to adults who were in need.

After receiving her administrative credential in 1979, Mrs. Figueroa was named the site Coordinator for the Mid City ABE center, a branch of Belmont Adult School in downtown Los Angeles.

In 1986, it was our good fortune that she was brought to Baldwin Park to impact the

lives of adults and young people in the San Gabriel Valley. Mrs. Figueroa came to Baldwin Park Unified School District Adult and Community Education (BPACE) program as an Administrative Assistant. Today, she is retiring as the Assistant Director of Adult and Community Education and is responsible for administration of the BPACE program.

Mrs. Figueroa lives in San Gabriel with her husband Jim and has three children and three stepchildren. Her greatest joy is her grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, Adriana Figueroa has had a remarkable career, one in which her enthusiasm and dedication to public education has made a difference in countless lives. Our community is extremely proud of her accomplishments. Let us send our sincerest appreciation for her fine work and recognize her for contributing to public education.

I commend her for her achievements and hope she enjoys her retirement.

TRIBUTE TO ELEANOR KIELISZEK

HON. STEVEN R. ROTHMAN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2000

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay special tribute to a dear friend and a truly noteworthy and admirable community leader from the Township of Teaneck in my District. A few short weeks ago, Eleanor Kieliszek retired from her seat on the Township Council, thus ending an impressive political career which began in 1965.

Beginning with her appointment as the first female member of the Township's Planning Board in 1965, Eleanor Kieliszek has been a tireless crusader for the residents of Teaneck. In 1970, Eleanor Kieliszek entered a 17-way race for Township Council as the only woman candidate. She won, Mr. Speaker, due in large part to her tireless energy evidenced by her constant door-to-door campaigning. Twice, from 1974–1978 and 1990–1992, the voters elected her mayor as an expression of their confidence.

A student of politics, Eleanor Kieliszek is aware that compromise and hard work are integral and historic parts of the American political system. By working with her fellow Council members, Eleanor Kieliszek was able to help preside of a period of unbridled economic development in Teaneck while ensuring that a great deal of the municipality's open spaces would remain in that state for perpetuity. The 350 acre Overpeck Park, enjoyed by so many in their leisure time, is a fine testament to this legacy. Mr. Speaker, Eleanor Kieliszek was also able to bring Teaneck together in the face of great racial tension in 1990. Many credit the neighborhood meetings which she helped initiate in a time of great concern with fostering dialogue and diversity in the community.

Mr. Speaker, a representative democracy such as ours only thrives when those with strong wills and good hearts take time from their personal lives to give time to others around them. As the Township of Teaneck prepares to name a wonderfully large green area after Eleanor Kieliszek to honor her three decade's service to her home, I find it fitting for this House to rise and salute this outstanding local official. On the occasion of her

retirement from elected life, we thank Eleanor Kieliszek and send her our heartiest best wishes for the future.

HONORING BERNARD ALAIN PORTELLI

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2000

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Bernard Alain Portelli, who today, July 20, 2000, will become a naturalized citizen of the United States of America.

Mr. Portelli came to the United States from France in 1984. Prior to coming to the United States, Mr. Portelli established himself among European royalty and within the fashion and entertainment industry as an exemplary businessman and artist. His talent, his hard work and his dedication quickly earned him a similar reputation in Washington, D.C. Based in Georgetown, Mr. Portelli has been featured on numerous television programs around the country and his talents are frequently sought out by the fashion and film industries. Today he is the proprietor of the highly regarded and highly successful OKYO Salon.

For over seven years I've been blessed to call him my friend. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Bernard Portelli on this great occasion in his life and the life of our nation.

THE PLIGHT OF THE GREAT APES

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2000

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, last month, scientists from 12 nations sounded the warning alarm that the world's great apes—the chimpanzee, the gorilla, the bonobo, and the orangutan—are hurtling toward extinction at an alarming rate.

These animals are humankind's closest living relatives in the animal kingdom, yet they face the very real possibility of disappearing from the wild within the near future due to habitat destruction and illegal hunting. While many species are currently facing imminent declines due to these anthropogenic pressures, the great apes are especially susceptible because of their slow reproduction and demanding habitat requirements. If action is not taken immediately, these animals will most likely cease to exist within our children's lifetime. We cannot stand by and let this tragedy come to pass.

The threats to the great apes stem largely from increased commercial logging that facilitates both habitat loss and a growing and largely unregulated commercial trade in bushmeat. These factors are further exacerbated by civil war in many areas that are home to great ape populations.

In Indonesia, it is estimated that less than 2 percent of the orangutan's original forest habitat remains. The most recent population estimates of these apes in Borneo and Sumatra, the only two remaining areas that support orangutans in the wild, are less than 25,000

individuals. This figure represents a decline of 30 to 50 percent in the last decade and 10 to 20 percent annually. At this rate, if nothing is done, the orangutan will be extinct within 50 years.

Although rates of forest loss are lower in most parts of Africa than in Indonesia, the irrevocable conversion of forested ape habitat to farmland and plantations poses a similar threat to populations of chimpanzees, gorillas, and bonobos. In fact, Africa is the third largest timber exporter in the world. Experts predict that in Zaire, Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon, forests could disappear within 70 years if current trends continue. When this is considered along with the large habitat requirements of great apes and the need for protecting large enough populations to maintain long-term viability, the loss of tropical rainforest habitat poses a dire threat to global ape populations.

Another growing problem threatening ape populations, particularly in Africa, is the dramatic rise in bushmeat trade. Bushmeat, the term used to describe wildlife used for meat consumption, includes gorillas, chimpanzees, and a variety of other species. Once only used as a sustainable subsistence food source, the largely illegal commercial trade has skyrocketed in recent years with devastating impacts on ape populations. This dramatic rise has occurred for a number of reasons, but primarily because of increased hunting to feed local people who have been forced to rely on cash economies rather than traditional ways of life and the influx of commercial logging companies who use bushmeat to feed their employees.

In addition, as timber concessions continue to open up once remote forests with the construction of roads, logging trucks are hauling out hundreds, if not thousands, of pounds of bushmeat each week. Moreover, the increased prevalence of bushmeat has caused markets to move beyond local centers to urban areas and even international trade. According to the most recent reports, in the Congo Basin 4,500 gorillas per year and 3,000 chimps per year are killed solely for the bushmeat market. Even in the absence of habitat loss, the bushmeat trade in the Congo Basin is likely to lead to extinction of chimpanzees and gorillas there within the next century.

Perhaps most staggering are the results of a just-completed Harvard survey of great ape research sites. This survey found that great ape populations are known, or suspected, to be declining in 96% of protected areas. It is these sites where the prospect for ape survival is best. In these protected areas, great apes are increasingly threatened by hunting, logging, war, and increased human population pressure in surrounding communities.

We are only now beginning to understand and appreciate the complex role of great apes in maintaining the ecological health and biodiversity of tropical and subtropical forest habitats. Biologists fear that the loss of all great apes could irrevocably alter forest structure and the composition of species which could intensify other environmental threats caused by deforestation and agricultural development.

A broad range of actions is needed if there is to be any hope of saving great ape populations. Laws on logging and poaching must