

IN RECOGNITION OF BRITTNEY MORASKI

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to recognize my Senate page today, Brittney Moraski of Bark River, MI, for achieving highest honors at the Senate Page School. Brittney's hard work earned her a 4.0 grade point average this semester, the highest in her class.

Highest honors are nothing new for Brittney. At home in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Brittney attends Bark River-Harris High School where she is a member of the National Honor Society and also maintains a 4.0 G.P.A. Brittney took advanced placement classes in U.S. Government and Politics and microeconomics and achieved the highest score possible on both A.P. exams. In addition, Brittney has taken college classes at Bay de Noc Community College. Brittney was the first Bark River-Harris High School student to earn the highest endorsement level possible on the senior-level Michigan Educational Assessment Program test as a sophomore.

Complementing her school year work, Brittney has participated in activities that further nurtured her lifelong interest in government and politics. Last summer, Brittney spent three weeks in Washington as part of the Junior Statesmen Summer School at Georgetown University where she took a course on foreign policy and had the opportunity to meet with high-ranking officials in the Congress, State Department, Pentagon, White House and French Embassy.

In addition to her exemplary academic achievements, Brittney stands out for her community involvement. She is the president of the Bark River-Harris Key Club and serves on the Community Foundation of Delta County's Youth Advisory Committee. During the past three years, she traveled to Honduras to volunteer at a soup kitchen, distribute food and clothing, and read and play with Honduran children.

Brittney brings her idealism and achievements to her duties as a Senate page. In her application for the page program, Brittney wrote, "I would not only grow as a student of government from the experience, but I would grow as an individual and as a potential future public servant." Later in her application, Brittney said, "I believe in the U.S. government and in American values, and I would be honored to serve as a page in the epicenter of American lawmaking, the U.S. Congress."

Mr. President, Brittney Moraski exemplifies all that is best in the Senate Page Program and in our young people, and I congratulate her on her outstanding achievements.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

THE OUTSTANDING SERVICE OF JUDITH OLIVER

• Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I welcome this opportunity to pay tribute to Judith Oliver, Director of The Children's Room Center for Grieving Children and Teenagers in Arlington, MA.

Ms. Oliver has dedicated her professional life to aiding children and families who suffer the loss of a family member. A week from tomorrow, the Center will celebrate its fifth anniversary with a dinner and an auction, and she will be presented with an eminently well-deserved award for excellence.

Ms. Oliver became Director of The Children's Room in 1992, when it was a program at Hospice West in Waltham. She organized it as an independent charity in 1999, and since then it has grown from helping a group of ten children to serving over a hundred children and sixty families.

Today, The Children's Room is a beacon of hope and help for bereaved children and others in their family. It provides a safe and caring environment where children, teenagers and their families can obtain the support they need in grieving over the death of their loved ones.

Ms. Oliver's extraordinary caring, compassion, and dedication are the hallmarks of her career. In many ways, she's a pioneer in this very important field. She earned a Master's Degree in Counseling at Loyola College in Baltimore, with an internship in grief counseling at Hospice of the Chesapeake in Maryland and at Grandma's House, a Washington, D.C. home for children with AIDS.

As we all know, the need for these counseling services is especially great today, Judith Oliver's leadership is a model for all communities. Massachusetts is proud of her. We're fortunate to have her, and I join her many admirers in congratulating her on this award.●

OREGON VETERANS

• Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, today I rise to honor an Oregon veteran who answered the call of duty in service to his country. Grover Judd Killpack was born on January 24, 1924 in a small mining town called Mohrland, close to Price, UT.

Judd's military career began in October of 1943, when he entered the Coast Guard as a Seaman Apprentice. He was assigned to the USS *Callaway*, an attack transport ship that fought in the Pacific theater during World War II. While on the *Callaway*, he ran one of the landing boats, transporting the soldiers to the fight and returning the wounded to the ship. He participated in six invasions in the Pacific, including the Battle for Leyte Gulf and the Battle for Iwo Jima. Judd watched as the Marines took control of the island and raised the flag on Mount Suribachi; a

scene immortalized in the now-famous monument in Arlington, VA.

After his tour of duty ended in May of 1946, he left the Coast Guard as a petty officer 3rd class and went home to Price, UT where he married Eva Milkovich. He attended Carbon College where he focused his studies in the dairy field. He demonstrated his leadership skills as the student body president. He transferred to Utah State University where he participated in the ROTC program and received his degree in Dairy Technology. During this time Judd and Eve were blessed with a son and a daughter.

Judd took a sales job that led him and his family to Denver, CO. One day before his tour was over, his country called for his services once again. He answered that call, leaving for the Korean War as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army in January of 1952. During his short time in the conflict he served as an artillery observer flying over enemy lines to direct friendly fire on communist targets. He came home for good in November of 1952 as a 1st Lieutenant.

A new job opportunity brought Judd and his family to the northwest. They stayed in Seattle, WA until January of 1955. They found their permanent home in Beaverton, OR and the Killpack family has lived there since that day.

Judd went on to be a sales rep for the R&H Company in 1961 and spent the rest of his working days with them, finally retiring in 1986. Judd has been married to Eve since July 3, 1946 and has two children, five grandchildren, and one great grandchild on the way.

For his selfless service to others, and to the United States in time of war, I salute Grover Judd Killpack as an Oregon Veteran hero.●

NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

• Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, this week is National Public Health Week, an annual event sponsored by the American Public Health Association or APHA. Every year in April, national, State and local public health professionals highlight an important public health issue, to raise awareness about leading health problems impacting our nation. This year, the theme of National Public Health Week is "eliminating health disparities".

There are many groups that experience disparities in health, largely a result of limited access to important health care services. Living in a rural area is in itself a health risk factor, due to numerous factors that can adversely influence health and access and the resulting disparities are well documented. Chronic illnesses are more prevalent in rural communities and studies have shown that rural residents are more likely to describe their overall health status as poorer than their urban counterparts. Limitation in activity due to chronic health conditions among adults is more common in rural counties than in large metro counties.

The University of Pittsburgh's Center for Rural Health Practices released a report this week which highlights specific rural health disparity issues. The report indicated that death rates for children and young adults are highest in the most rural counties. Nationally and within each region, death rates from unintentional injuries increases greatly as counties become less urban. And death rates for motor vehicle-related injuries in most rural counties are over twice as high as the rates in central counties of large metro areas. My home State of South Dakota ranks 8th with two other States for having the worst motor vehicle death rate in the Nation.

In addition, adolescents living in the most rural counties are most likely to smoke. For example, in 1999 for the United States as a whole, 19 percent of adolescents in the most rural counties smoked compared with 11 percent in metro counties. This disparity also holds true for adults who smoke. Adults in rural areas are more likely to consume alcohol than those living in other areas, and both men and women in rural areas have higher rates of self-reported obesity than men and women in other areas.

Minorities in rural areas also face additional health disparities. Diabetes among Native Americans is more than twice that of the general population, and heart disease and cancer are the leading causes of death among this population. Infant mortality among this population is 1.7 times higher than among non-Hispanic whites and the sudden infant death syndrome or SIDS rate among this minority group is the highest of any population group in the nation.

It is important that we find ways to address rural public health disparities. Access to health care providers is a critical component of the solution and that is why I have long supported rural provider payment equity. Payment equity ensures that the doors stay open at our local hospitals and physicians offices. I feel that Congress needs to continue to address this important issue and make a commitment to rural residents across America that it will support initiatives to remedy this problem.

While payment equity is a critical component in solving this disparity issue, it is only part of the overall solution. Access problems continue to be a distinct challenge in rural communities, due largely to declining rates of health care workers in these areas. In 1998, there were six times as many general pediatricians per 100,000 in central counties of large metro areas as in the most rural counties and five times as many general internists.

One of the ways to address this problem is through enhanced funding for important Federal programs that promote the recruitment and retention of health care workers. I have recently sent letters to the leadership on the Senate Labor, Health and Human Serv-

ices, Education Appropriations Subcommittee, requesting a \$63 million dollar increase for Title VIII nurse education programs created under the Nurse Reinvestment Act. I have also asked the committee to restore the President's proposed drastic cuts of almost \$200 million for the Title VII health professions programs, by providing \$308 million for these programs.

In order to further address rural health disparities, we need to strengthen efforts towards establishing a 21st century health care system that utilizes information technology to allow health care professionals across rural America to share their knowledge, expertise and resources. I have worked with my colleagues in the Senate to secure funding in recent years to allow just that, such as the wonderful health information systems project through the Community HealthCare Association of South Dakota, and the nurse distance learning project through the University of South Dakota and the Good Samaritan Society. I encourage my colleagues to continue to build on these types of rural specific projects nationwide so that we may see this dream of a modern 21st century health care system become a reality.

In order to address the Native American health disparities problems, in addition to improving access to direct health care services, it is important that we obtain comprehensive data on key health risk factors impacting this population. In South Dakota, the Northern Plains Tribal Epidemiology Center in Rapid City is providing information to tribes and working with tribes to help access health data through good assessment tools, which can be used to develop interventions and improve the health in Native American communities across the State. This is an effective model for approaching a critical minority health problem and the Center combines epidemiology, research, and public health practice to develop interventions that can be disseminated to the tribal communities.

Often our best solutions come from the local experts. I look forward to working with public health experts in both South Dakota, as well as the Nation at large, to address these shortfalls in rural health. I believe that the information we gain through these discussions will provide Congress with a broader scope of knowledge, thus allowing us to better meet the needs of those who fall into this health disparity category.●

JOHN THORNTON

● Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I rise today to tell my colleagues about a generous person, who I am proud to call my friend and a Tennessean.

His name is John "Thunder" Thornton. You may have read about his generosity last week in USA Today.

In 1998, John went to the Final Four in San Antonio. While there, he had a

frightening experience—he has a heart attack in the back of a taxi cab. His cab driver, Ceasar Hernandez, quickly drove him to the hospital and then made sure his teenage children, Dori and Johnny, got back to the hotel where family friends could take care of them.

In the USA Today article, John said, "Caesar saved my life, and he comforted my kids at a time when they needed that. I wanted to do something for him."

So to show his appreciation 6 years ago, John bought the stranger who saved his life a 1998 Cadillac sedan. The new car allowed Mr. Hernandez to start a cab company in his hometown of Victoria, TX instead of commuting to San Antonio to drive a taxi.

John's gratefulness and graciousness doesn't end there. He returned to San Antonio last Friday for the Final Four. While there, he took Mr. Hernandez to the games and dinner and also had a surprise in store. Anyone who knows John knows he's an avid fan of the University of Tennessee. Ten years ago, he bought an orange and white stretch limo that he's driven to UT games across the country. Now Mr. Hernandez's taxi cab fleet includes that limousine.

This isn't the first time something like this has happened. Most people in Tennessee know about John's gift to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville to establish the Thornton Athletic Student Life Center. But most people don't know that 10 years ago, when John sold his business in Georgia, he paid off the mortgages of every employee that worked for him.

As I said earlier, I am proud to call him my friend, and I am proud to call him a Tennessean. His father, Lloyd, and my father carpooled to work at the Aluminum Company of America in Alcoa when John and I were growing up in Maryville.

The Lloyd L. Thornton stadium at Maryville College is named in honor of him—a tribute by his son.

On a personal note, I was proud to introduce John's daughter Dori, our Tennessee Cherry Blossom princess, at an event last week. She is a young Washington professional doing a fantastic job in political event planning and fundraising for Hammond and Associates. Like her father, Dori has an incredible energy and commitment to service. She serves as a patient care volunteer at the Children's National Medical Center and the Gilda's Club of Greater Washington and is a Junior Achievement kindergarten teacher at Douglas MacArthur Elementary School. She is a lovely young woman and a true Tennessee volunteer.

Mr. President, thank you for allowing me to tell you and our Senate colleagues about a man who has found success and has set an example for all of us in what he does for others with that success.●