

The South Tama Community School District received a 2004 Harkin grant totaling \$500,000 which it used to help build a new elementary school. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, it is the kind of school facility that every child in America deserves.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the South Tama Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Michelle Yuska, vice president Ron Hala, Jackie Dvorak, Mark McFate and Anne Michael and former board members G. Joe Lyon, Margaret Kubik, Alan Upah and Donald Wacha. I would also like to recognize superintendent Kerri Nelson, former superintendent Larry Molacek, business manager Joanna Hofer, former business manager John Legg and director of buildings and grounds Tim Downs.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the South Tama Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them and wish them a very successful new school year.●

#### WATERLOO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Waterloo Community School District and to report on their participation in a unique Fed-

eral partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Waterloo Community School District received 15 Harkin grants totaling \$5,434,952 which it used to help modernize and make safety improvements throughout the district. The Waterloo Community School District received seven construction grants totaling \$3,786,616 which have helped the district build Walter Cunningham School of Excellence, Irving Elementary School, Lincoln Elementary School, and Poyner Elementary School. The grants have also helped with a classroom addition and renovations at Lowell Elementary School and with renovation projects at East High School, West High School and Kingsley Elementary School. These schools are the modern, state-of-the-art facilities that befit the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, they are the kind of schools that every child in America deserves.

The district also received eight fire safety grants totaling \$1,648,336 to install fire alarm systems and make other repairs at East High School, Central Middle School, Hoover Middle School, Logan Middle School, Bunker Middle School, McKinstry Elementary School, and Kingsley Elementary School. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

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and grounds Marty Metcalf, former director of buildings and grounds Jack Fitzgerald, board secretary Sharon Miller, along with a number of building principals including Mary Meier, Bob Tyson, Martin Van Roekel, Dr. Gail Moon, Elizabeth Crowley, Vicky Smith, Dr. Mary Jo Wagner, Kari Gunderson, Bob Wright, Dr. Loleta Montgomery, Brian Ortman, Phillip Anderson, Jennifer Hartman, Marla Padgett, and Pam Zeigler.

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#### TRIBUTE TO VICE ADMIRAL CONRAD C. LAUTENBACHER, JR.

● Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, although many Americans may never have heard of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, the agency plays a significant role in the daily lives of Americans, whether it is providing daily weather forecasts, supporting marine commerce, or monitoring our climate.

For nearly 7 years, NOAA has been guided by the leadership of VADM Conrad C. Lautenbacher. When he retires on October 31, Admiral Lautenbacher will leave a lasting legacy at NOAA that has helped strengthen our knowledge and understanding of our oceans and atmosphere.

Life on Earth relies on the ocean. Our oceans regulate our planet's climate, support global commerce, and provide food. The livelihoods of millions of Americans rely on our oceans. Yet, we know little about what lies beneath the surface of our oceans. Ninety-five percent of our oceans are unexplored. Working with the Senate Commerce Committee, Admiral Lautenbacher commissioned America's first ship for ocean exploration, the *Okeanos Explorer*. The ship's missions will include reconnaissance to search unknown areas and map the deep seafloor. Through telepresence, the

ship and its discoveries will be connected to live audiences so they can see what lies beneath the waters and help inspire a new generation of "aquanauts."

Under Admiral Lautenbacher's leadership, the National Weather Service has improved its severe weather warnings. Seconds make a difference during flash floods, tornados, tsunamis, and severe thunderstorms. With improved scientific knowledge, NOAA is providing storm-based warnings that give the public more geographically specific information about severe weather. These storm-specific warnings allow first responders and those in harm's way to take the necessary actions to protect lives and property.

An important part of NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment. Admiral Lautenbacher has led U.S. efforts working with more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, GEOSS. Earth observations are critical to our understanding of complex climate and ocean systems. With improved data about the interconnectedness of Earth systems, we will be better equipped to help emergency managers make evacuation decisions, to aid State and local decisionmakers in protecting coastal communities and improving infrastructure development, and to more accurately predict weather and climate changes that affect our economy.

Admiral Lautenbacher also worked closely with Senator STEVENS and me to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. This act marks a natural evolution in fisheries management because it recognizes not only the need to carefully manage fish populations, but the ocean ecosystems our fisheries occupy.

Given the size of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone in the Pacific and the reliance of Hawaii and the Pacific Islands on the oceans, NOAA's programs are of critical importance to the Pacific. More than lending technical assistance, Admiral Lautenbacher matched word to deed by growing NOAA's capacity in the Pacific region—from establishing a new National Marine Fisheries Service regional office and lab, to breaking ground on a NOAA Pacific Regional Facility, to developing the data and environmental monitoring infrastructure needed to support science-based management.

Admiral Lautenbacher has my gratitude and deserves our Nation's gratitude for his dedication to public service. I wish him well as he moves into the next chapter of his life.●

#### TRIBUTE TO BOB DEMERSSEMAN

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Bob DeMersseman of Rapid City, SD, for over 22 years of service with the Rapid City Economic Development Partnership.

Mr. DeMersseman is retiring this December after an impressive career of service with the Economic Development Partnership. For 19 of the 22 years, Bob served as president of the organization. During his tenure, Bob and his staff and the city's economic development groups have created and expanded two industrial parks, set up the low-interest Rapid Fund loan fund, developed the Western Research Alliance to promote a growing technology community and created the Black Hills Business Development Center, an incubator to help researchers, inventors and entrepreneurs turn their ideas into commercial ventures.

Bob has been instrumental in forging vital and important relationships and partnerships with area Chambers of Commerce, economic development organizations, universities and community officials. There was a time when local communities didn't foster such working relationships and with the guidance and advice of leaders like Bob, this improved tremendously. Today, when one Black Hills community attracts or expands a business, other communities realize that they also benefit.

While developing partnerships and relationships between communities and their leaders, Bob has also realized that economic development and attracting businesses and industries to the local area has become increasingly competitive. Bob along with other Rapid City and Black Hills leaders have done a commendable job in creating and developing more tools for the tool box to promote Rapid City and the Black Hills to national and international prospects. He has helped to acquire and expand land tracts for business and industrial parks, worked hard to promote and market Rapid City and the Black Hills communities and provided valuable guidance on issues impacting the future promotion and growth of Rapid City and the Black Hills region. He has worked hard to expand Rapid City's economic base.

Here is what a few of Bob's peers say about his impact on economic development in the Rapid City area. "In my opinion, Bob has been at the front end of developing a very diversified economic development program for Rapid City, and he will be remembered for putting a lot of great things in place," said Mark Merchen, chairman of Black Hills Vision, a group working to create a regional technology corridor.

"Bob has been such a key part of our team effort to create economic development in Rapid City," said Pat Burchill, chairman of the Rapid City Economic Development Foundation, the partnership's real estate arm. "Our success has a lot to do with Bob's efforts."

I commend Bob for his passionate dedication and tireless work to expand and enhance Rapid City's economic potential as well as helping to develop and promote that same potential in the Black Hills region. I wish him all the

best in his retirement and know that he will bring a high level of enthusiasm, energy, dedication and commitment to his retirement endeavors.●

#### REMEMBERING MICHAEL PROCTOR SMITH

● Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate the life of Michael Proctor Smith, who passed away at his home in New Orleans on Friday, September 26, 2008. He was 71. Michael, a native of New Orleans, was an award-winning professional freelance photographer who chronicled the music, culture, and folklife of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana for over 40 years.

Michael was well known for documenting New Orleans social club parades and jazz funerals, neighborhood traditions, Mardi Gras Indians, spiritual church ceremonies, and many of the city and State's renowned jazz, blues, rhythm and blues, and gospel musicians. He was a fixture at every New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival since it began in 1970 until his retirement in 2005. His works are internationally recognized and are permanent collections at a number of museums including the Bibliothèque National in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian Institution, the Historic New Orleans Collection, the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, and the Louisiana State Museum.

In the last few years, Michael had been honored with numerous awards celebrating his work. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities in 2002 and was named Music Photographer of the Year by Offbeat magazine. In 2004 he received a Mayor's Arts Award from the Arts Council of New Orleans and a Clarence John Laughlin Lifetime Achievement Award from the New Orleans/Gulf South chapter of the American Society of Media Photographers. In 2005, he received the Delgado Society award from the New Orleans Museum of Art, the first photographer to be so honored. The recipient of two Photographer's Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Michael's prints have toured worldwide through the U.S. Information Agency.

Michael's photographs grace the covers of many CDs and record albums, illustrate numerous books and magazine articles published in America and Europe, and are a staple of documentary films on the rich cultural history of New Orleans and Louisiana.

He was also an original owner and founder of Tipitina's, an iconic music club located at the corner of Napoleon Avenue and Tchoupitoulas Street in uptown New Orleans.

Michael is survived by his partner Karen Louise Snyder; his brother Joseph Byrd Hatchitt Smith; two daughters, Jan Lamberton Smith and Leslie Blackshear Smith; and three grandchildren, Chance King Doyle, Leslie