

Pola has two simple wishes.

"I want to hear that my family is living in peace, not in war, worried all the time, and to have the hope of seeing them."

Hedo and Pola have also received support from their friends, Noah and Natalie Baker Merrill.

"It's very important in these times for Americans to get to know Iraqis and see them as their neighbors," said Noah Baker Merrill, a founder of Direct Aid International, which helps Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan.

Baker Merrill and his wife met Hedo and Pola through SIT, where Natalie is a student advocate.

The United States has done a disgraceful job in helping the refugees, said Baker Merrill, accepting only 1,800 of the 2 to 2.5 million who have fled Iraq.

Nearly 100,000 Iraqis have been allowed to settle in Sweden, but the majority live in refugee camps in Jordan and Syria. Resettlement in a different country is not the answer, said Baker Merrill. Making Iraq a safe country that Iraqis can return to is the answer.

"The overwhelming majority just desperately want to be able to go home."

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to add my voice of support for the first-ever World Autism Awareness Day, a day that is sorely needed. In 2006 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, estimated that 1 in 166 children were diagnosed with autism. Today the CDC estimates that number to be 1 in 150. In fact, 67 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder per day; a new case is diagnosed almost every 20 minutes.

Like many of my colleagues, I have had the opportunity to spend time with children with autism and their families, from Connecticut and around the Nation. Autism is a complex neurological disorder, which manifests itself differently in each individual but occurs in all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. It is a lifelong condition that affects not only the individual with the disability, but impacts the entire family, often requiring intensive levels of support and intervention.

There are so many unanswered questions about autism. The first step in answering them is for us to come together as a society and recognize the many challenges autism presents in the U.S. and throughout the world. It is my hope that today everyone will take a moment to consider autism and the millions of individuals and families struggling with this developmental disability.

We should also make note of the great work and sacrifice of families affected by autism and the tireless advocates for autism research and treatment who have worked to make this day a reality. Among them I want to particularly note my friends Bob and Suzanne Wright who have worked with me for years to address the needs of those dealing with autism. But there is still more to be done.

At a time when the number of children and families living with autism has grown exponentially, it is important that we recognize the need to ex-

pand our federal commitment to combating this disease. Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States, yet we are not committing enough of our federal resources to developing the type of scientific breakthroughs in autism that are needed. It is time to redouble our efforts and help the thousands of families who are raising children with autism.

Among the first major steps in the Federal response to autism was in 2006 when Congress unanimously passed the Combating Autism Act, which my former colleague from Pennsylvania, Senator Rick Santorum and I authored along with the strong support of many of our colleagues including Senators KENNEDY and ENZI. This initiative represents the largest federal expansion of funding and programs for children and families with autism spectrum disorder.

We took another major step recently on the Senate floor with the unanimous passage of an amendment Senator SUSAN COLLINS and I offered to the fiscal year 2009 budget resolution that would double funding for programs dealing with autism at the CDC, the National Institutes of Health, and other health agencies. It is my hope that my colleagues will keep this momentum going by making sure this funding finds its way into the final budget resolution conference report and then through the appropriations process. The research these funds would support will help us understand more about the causes of and appropriate treatments and services for autism.

We should close no doors on promising avenues of research into the causes of autism. The Combating Autism Act and my recent amendment to the budget resolution allow all biomedical research opportunities on autism to be pursued. In fact, just today a new study of toddlers finds that there may be a link between babies born very prematurely and autism. As the author of the PREEMIE Act, along with my colleague Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, I find this news particularly interesting. I look forward to the upcoming Surgeon General's Conference in June which was called for under the PREEMIE Act as an opportunity to further pursue this possible link between extreme prematurity and autism.

As we look to the future, we also need to find new and innovative ways to help parents and loved ones care for family members suffering from autism. That is why I have introduced S. 2741, The Disability Savings Act of 2008. This bill will encourage individuals with disabilities and their families to save money for their unique needs in tax-advantaged disability savings accounts. This money could then be drawn out as needed, to pay for services and care that are needed.

Today, on World Autism Awareness Day, I hope we in the Senate can make finding a cure for autism a top priority of the Congress and the Nation. To-

gether, we can make life a little better for those with autism and their loved ones.

IN HONOR OF BOB VALEU

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, on May 1, 2008, Bob Valeu ends his service to the U.S. Senate.

For 16 years, Bob Valeu has done an outstanding job as the director of my North Dakota Senate offices. His passion for public policy, his dedication to our State and country, and his commitment to excellence have been a hallmark of his service these past years.

Those of us who serve as Senators get attention for the work we do. But we understand that very often that attention and our accomplishments are a result of some very talented and dedicated staff who work with us to advance the interests of our State and our country. That is certainly the case with Bob Valeu's service to me and to the Senate.

Whenever an event ended, the lights were turned down, the microphone was turned off, and I had moved on to another event, Bob Valeu was usually still there solving problems and working with people to address their needs. He was that kind of State director—the type every Senator aspires to have.

Bob and I have traveled tens of thousands of miles together to every nook and cranny of our State. We have been to every kind of event imaginable: high school convocations, Main Street tours, ribbon cuttings, university commencements, lutefisk dinners, State fairs, karaoke competitions, and chili cookoffs. But beyond all of that—and even more importantly—Bob Valeu had provided wise counsel and advice over the years. And I know that even as he leaves my official staff, he will continue to be a valuable advisor and a good friend.

So I want to use this opportunity to publicly thank my friend and a very dedicated American with whom I have been privileged to serve these past 16 years.

To Bob and his wife Marge and their entire family, on behalf of the Senate, I tell you that our country is a better place because of your service. And this Senator is deeply appreciative of the many years of excellence you dedicated to the best interests of our great Nation.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF DITH PRAN

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate the extraordinary life of Dith Pran, who risked his life to expose the terrors of the Khmer Rouge regime in his native Cambodia, and who later became the subject of the Oscar award-winning film, "The Killing Fields." Mr. Dith died March 30, 2008, in New Jersey, surrounded by relatives and friends. He

was a defender of human rights, a journalist, a teacher, and a hero.

As many fled Cambodia during the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge in 1975, Mr. Dith sent his wife and children to safety abroad but stayed behind with investigative journalist Sydney H. Schanberg to help ensure that news of the events there reached the outside world. He believed his country and people could only be saved from the Khmer Rouge if individuals in other countries understood the tragedy gathering in his homeland.

Amidst the crisis spreading throughout Southeast Asia in the years following the Vietnam war—a crisis my father, Charles Whitehouse, also saw firsthand through his work as U.S. Ambassador to Laos and Thailand in the 1970s—Dith Pran was a witness to, and a fierce critic of, the greatest atrocities men have inflicted upon their fellow men.

Against all odds, Mr. Dith survived the Cambodian genocide in which 2 million Cambodians, one-third of the population, were killed. Most of his extended family were also killed. He suffered through 4 years of hard labor, living on just one teaspoon of rice a day and whatever animals and insects he could find. Mr. Dith finally escaped from a commune and travelled 40 miles to the Thai border through what he coined “the killing fields,” past the bodies of those killed by the Khmer Rouge, before reaching safety.

After reaching the United States, Mr. Dith became a photojournalist for the New York Times. He founded the Dith Pran Holocaust Awareness Project to educate individuals around the world of the horrors he survived in order to prevent future genocides. He was appointed a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 1985.

For his efforts to educate the world, Mr. Dith was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 1998. He also received the Award of Excellence from the International Center in New York.

Dith Pran said: “Part of my life is saving life. I don’t consider myself a politician or a hero. I’m a messenger. If Cambodia is to survive, she needs many voices.” Dith Pran has been a powerful and compelling voice for his countrymen and the land he loved. His willingness to share his story brought light to dark places and hope to millions.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO THURMAN ADAMS, JR.

• Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to the Honorable Thurman G. Adams, Jr., Delaware’s longest serving State Senator.

Senator Adams was first elected to Delaware’s 19th senatorial district in Sussex County in 1972. He served as senate majority leader from 1999 to 2003, when he was elected President Pro

Tempore of the senate by his colleagues.

When I was Governor of Delaware, I worked closely with Thurman on many issues. He serves as chairman of the Senate Executive Committee, which considers gubernatorial and judicial appointments. Thurman has a keen understanding of the important role Delaware plays as a worldwide corporate center and has been a consistent champion of Delaware’s judiciary. Thurman has also been a strong advocate of public safety issues, sponsoring legislation to establish Delaware’s “Enhanced 911” emergency telephone system. As owner and president of his own feed and grain agribusiness, T.G. Adams, and Son, Inc., Thurman has worked for the interests of Delaware’s farming and business communities. He is a leader in such issues as highway and local roadway improvements, education accountability, and the growth of Delaware Technical and Community College’s Owens Campus in Georgetown.

Thurman has a long history of civic and community service. Prior to being elected to public office, he served as chairman of the Governor’s Highway Safety Committee and a member of the Delaware State Highway Commission. Active in his community, he has held such positions as director of Milford Memorial Hospital and the Medical Center of Delaware, director of the Baltimore Trust Company for 27 years, president of Harrington Raceway, chairman of the Union United Methodist Church Administrative Board, and president of the Eastern Shore Grain Dealers Association.

The recipient of awards too numerous to list, Thurman was most recently awarded the Liberty Bell Award, presented by the Delaware State Bar Association in recognition of significant contributions to the community by a nonattorney, and the Silver Good Citizenship Award of the Delaware Chapter of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. He also received the University of Delaware’s Medal of Fame Distinction and the “Wall of Fame” Award.

As his record shows, Senator Adams has a strong commitment to the State of Delaware. Born and raised in Bridgeville, he attended Bridgeville High and later graduated from the University of Delaware. He returned to Bridgeville where he built a successful business and raised his family. Thurman was a devoted husband to his wife Hilda, to whom he was married to for nearly 50 years. Senator and Mrs. Adams raised three wonderful children whom any parent would be proud to call their own. No stranger to tragedy, Thurman lost his beloved wife to cancer in 2002 several years after the death of their son Brent. Despite these heartbreaks, Senator Adams remains devoted to his children, seven grandsons and three great-grandchildren.

I have known Thurman Adams for many years. On a personal note, I remember fondly stopping by their sum-

mer home for lunch following the annual Fourth of July parade in Bethany Beach and enjoying immensely food and fellowship with him and his family. I can also attest to his expert egg-tossing skill, having been at the receiving end of his smoothly delivered toss at the Delaware State Fair Governor’s Day celebration. We have enjoyed many times together both personally and professionally, and we have shared times of deep sorrow, as well.

I am proud to congratulate my longtime friend and colleague on reaching this impressive milestone. The people of Delaware, and especially residents of the 19th District, are certainly well-served and fortunate to have been represented by such a man as Thurman Adams. Delaware is a far better place in which to live and work because of his stewardship and his leadership.●

HONORING ALBERT W. BELL

• Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, today I honor Albert Bell, who is retiring from the Durango Police Department following a lifelong career in law enforcement.

Since moving to Colorado from Kansas nearly 27 years ago, Al has dedicated himself and his talents to protecting the communities of southwest Colorado—first as a sergeant and then as Undersheriff for the La Plata County Sheriff’s Department, and, for the past 14 years, as chief of police for the Durango Police Department. He also served with me on the Police Officers Standards and Training Board and the Anti-Bullying in Schools Task Force during my tenure as attorney general of Colorado.

I am honored and privileged to have worked with Al personally over the years, both as attorney general and now as a U.S. Senator. Throughout his career and our work together, Al has demonstrated strong leadership, integrity, and an unyielding commitment to public safety. These attributes have made him one of the most well-regarded law enforcement officials in our State.

Al’s contributions to southwest Colorado extend beyond law enforcement. He currently serves as president of the Southwest Colorado Mental Health Board of Directors, and is a member of both the La Plata Health Care Project Steering Committee and the Regional Juvenile Center Task Force. Al’s involvement in these and other community organizations speaks to his generosity, selflessness, and his love for the southwest Colorado community.

In short, southwest Colorado has benefited tremendously because Al Bell chose a path of public service. He has set an example for all Americans to live by. While I am sorry to see him go, I know that he has very much earned a healthy and happy retirement.

On behalf of the people of Colorado, I thank Al for his service, and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.●