

Hallamore, a survivor of the fire, my office gained key insight into the contributions of these five citizens.

The first Idahoan I would like to acknowledge is Rod Poe. When the fire reached Rod's subdivision, he quickly alerted neighbors and evacuated the surrounding homes. Even before emergency assistance arrived, Rod was hosting down houses within the fire's path and putting out new blazes as they emerged. He stayed on the scene for the entire night and for many subsequent evenings inspecting the area for hot spots and patrolling for looters. His leadership in the community extended beyond physical service. He comforted the suffering, acquired household goods for those who had none, and contacted Boise's mayor to discuss future fire prevention solutions for the bench area.

Like Poe, officers Jason Rose and Chris Davis of the Boise Police Department were among the first to begin working at the location of the fire. These two men ran door-to-door urging residents to leave their homes. As homes ignited, the inferno-like conditions worsened and took their toll on the men. Their clothing caught fire; their vision blurred; and both suffered from smoke inhalation. Yet they faced these risks with valor, persisted in their duties and saved the lives of many residents.

Firefighter Charlie Ruffing is the sole coordinator of the Firefighters Burn-out Fund, a collection fund for the immediate needs of fire victims. In the aftermath of the Oregon Trail Fire, Ruffing responded on his personal cell phone around the clock. He worked diligently to collect cash and household goods and distribute them. To date, he has collected over \$110,000 in cash and gift-card donations. He displayed tremendous compassion and individual care for each family he assisted. He exceeded his responsibilities and earned the trust and respect of those he sought to assist.

Finally, Pattie Wagstaff organized an assistance network and coordinated a community donation event which amassed even more personal and household goods than the fire victims needed. Since the coordinator of her church's disaster relief program was among the victims of the fire, Wagstaff heroically filled the void. Taking 2 weeks off from her job to help in the relief efforts, Wagstaff quickly came to play an integral part in helping the affected families begin to return to normal life. Her presence inspired many during times of great shock and emotional upheaval.

Many hands played valuable roles in quelling the flames and caring for the people who survived the Oregon Trail Fire. To these five individuals and members of the Boise Police and Fire Departments as well as the others who so selflessly served their community, I join with family, friends and neighbors to offer my sincere gratitude. •

#### TRIBUTE TO ROBERT FISCH AND EUGENE LANSING

• Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I would like to share with my colleagues a remarkable story of generosity and public spiritedness.

Twenty years ago, in October 1988, I opened an official office in Dubuque in order to better serve people in that part of Iowa. Almost immediately, two wonderful citizens—Robert Fisch and Eugene Lansing—came forward to be of service to me and to the staffers in my new Dubuque office.

Both of them were retired Army veterans. Bob, who was 67 at the time, was a veteran of World War II. Gene, who was 57, was a veteran of the Korean war.

We eagerly accepted their offers of assistance. But little did we know that this initial act of kindness and generosity would extend for another two decades.

Over the years, Bob and Gene have been faithful friends and valued helping hands to my Dubuque staff. They have pitched in answering phones, taking messages, and helping out with many of the mundane but necessary tasks that keep an office running efficiently.

Bob usually comes into the office twice a week. Gene comes in once a week, driving 50 miles round trip from his home in Dyersville.

They have given their time and energy. But they have given much more: their wisdom and experience, their enthusiasm, and their amazing generosity of spirit. Bob Fisch and Gene Lansing are outstanding examples of the old saying that "you don't have to be on the public payroll to be an outstanding public servant."

Bob Fisch, after leaving the Army, worked for 42 years at Dubuque Packing Company and 14 years at the 4th Street Elevator. He is involved in many civic and volunteer organizations, and he founded an organization of community activists called the 11th Street Neighborhood Group. He and his beloved wife Marion, who died in 1999, were married for half a century. They have five adult children—four daughters and one son.

Gene Lansing and his wife, Marvel, have been married for 36 years. They have two sons and one daughter. After the Korean war, Gene worked on a tanker on the Great Lakes for 10 years, then went on to work at Wickes Lumber and, later, in the Dubuque City Parks Department. He is active in his church, Trinity Lutheran. He is also active in American Legion Post 136, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Mr. President, as you can imagine, Bob Fisch and Gene Lansing have become dear friends to my Dubuque staff over the years. I have gotten to know them, as well, and I have tremendous respect and admiration for both of them. That is why I wanted to take this opportunity, here in the Senate, to salute these two exceptional Iowans. I

want to publicly thank them for two decades of selfless service to my staff and me, and to the people of Iowa. •

#### FORT DODGE 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 Fort Dodge Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal 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 Fort Dodge Community School District received a 1999 Harkin grant totaling \$750,000 which it used to help build Butler 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. The district also received a 2005 fire safety grant totaling \$100,000 to upgrade install fire alarms systems at Riverside, Cooper and Feelhaver Schools.

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 Fort Dodge Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Stuart Cochrane, Jerry Schnurr, Janice Merz, Brian Forsythe, Craig Jarrard, Bill Kent and Kevin Rogers and former board members Steve Schwendeman, Ernest Kersten, Clark Fletcher, Jeri Green, Dennis Milefchick and Steve Lindeberg. I would also like to recognize superintendent Linda Brock, former superintendent Dr. David Haggard, former Butler principal Jerry Spittal, business manager Jack Christensen, director of operations

Chris Darling and former director of operations Sherwood Johnson.

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 Fort Dodge 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.●

#### HINTON 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 Hinton Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal 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 Hinton Community School District received a 2003 Harkin grant totaling \$234,475 which it used to help build an addition to the elementary school for preschool and child care programs. The Federal grant has made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

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 Hinton Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—Steve Eddy, Ed Vondrak, Rob Held, Lynette Blanchard and Randy Riediger and former board members Michelle Rodgers and Kenneth Hoefling. I would also like to recognize superintendent Allen Steen and curriculum director and principal Jane Krehbiel.

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 Hinton 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.●

#### NORTHWOOD-KENSETT 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 Northwood-Kensett Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal 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 fa-

cilities. 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 Northwood-Kensett Community School District received a 2002 Harkin grant totaling \$112,500 which it used to help replace the roof at the elementary school. The district also received two fire safety grants totaling \$66,280 to install a fire alarm system and to make other repairs at the elementary school and to install heat detectors and to make other safety improvements at the high school. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

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 Northwood-Kensett Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—John Anderson, Larry Hovey, Cindy Pangburn, Don Pangburn and Keith Braun and former board members Deanna Madsen, Dan Block and Mike Dierenfeld. I would also like to recognize superintendent Thomas Nugent, former superintendent Arnie Snook and business manager Karen Abrahams.

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 Northwood-Kensett 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.●

#### SOUTHEAST WARREN 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.