a medical home to more than 15 million Americans, most of whom are uninsured or have low incomes.

By providing people who are medically underserved with primary and preventive health care, the health centers reduce the need for expensive specialty care in hospitals and emergency rooms. The Health Centers Renewal Act will allow health centers to nearly double the number of individuals they can serve.

The Community Mental Health Services Improvement Act, which was introduced in January, will improve medical care for often-neglected mental health patients. Community mental health organizations serve more than six million adults and children across the country.

Many of these people are Medicaid beneficiaries, children in foster care, the destitute, homeless and uninsured. Unfortunately, community mental health centers have been chronically underfunded for many years and struggle to meet the basic health needs of the people they serve.

This bill will allow mental health care providers to recruit medical primary care doctors to care for patients with serious mental illness. Patients with mental illnesses die on average 25 years earlier than the average American, demonstrating the criticality of the need for better health care.

The Ending the Medicare Disability Waiting Period Act was introduced last year would close a loophole that allows more than a million people with disabilities to go without medical care for extended periods of time.

When Medicare expanded in 1972 to include individuals with significant disabilities, Congress stipulated that they had to first receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for two years before becoming eligible for Medicare, resulting in a three step process.

First, the Social Security Administration has to determine SSDI approval. Second, an individual has to wait five months before receiving SSDI benefits. Third, after receiving SSDI benefits an individual has to wait two more years before they can receive Medicare coverage.

More than 26 percent of individuals with significant disabilities have no health insurance during this two-year wait. Before becoming disabled, most of these people worked full time and paid into Medicare like everyone else.

Now, when they need help the most, they are required to wait without coverage. This bill would phase out the two-year wait over 10 years and completely eliminate the waiting period for people with life-threatening conditions.

Finally, I strongly support restoring funding for the Healthy Community Access Program, which in my community has helped enroll an additional 250,000 individuals in Medicaid and CHIP, while also directing the uninsured away from the ERs and toward an appropriate health care home.

To address this issue, I introduced the Community Coalitions for Access and Quality Improvement Act, H.R. 3561. This legislation would provide grants to community health access coalitions to implement best practices proven to reduce health care costs, achieve better health outcomes and improve access to health care for uninsured and low-income Americans.

Congress should enact legislation to provide all Americans with health insurance. Ideally, no child, no disabled worker, and no uninsured woman would suffer from a lack of adequate health care. As we work toward that goal, Congress should take every opportunity to put in place policies that provide as many people as possible with quality, affordable health insurance.

HONORING ELKS NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK

HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mrs. CAPPS. Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Santa Maria Elks Club to honor the first week of May as Elks National Youth Week in tribute to our junior citizens and to honor them for their achievement and contributions to their community, State and Nation.

Youth Week is designed to guide, inspire and encourage our youth to serve their community and help prepare them for the duties and opportunities of citizenship. Across the country, our Nation's young people are becoming active citizens and learning the importance of civic involvement. I firmly believe in encouraging the sense of community demonstrated by these ambitious and engaged young people.

As a mother and a grandmother, I am amazed by the strength of character I see in junior citizens. I commend the goals and ideals of the Santa Maria Elks Club and am proud to honor America's future leaders today.

H. RES. 49, TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL LETTER CARRIERS APPRECIATION DAY

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 49, a resolution that establishes National Letter Carriers Appreciation Day.

Letter carriers are vital to the United States economy and help keep families and friends in touch with one another. They provide mail service 6 days a week, in good and bad weather, to more than 144 million households. The United States Postal Service employs more than 705,000 letter carriers who deliver more than 43 tons of mail each year. This averages to approximately 2,300 letters, cards, magazines, and circulars per carrier per day.

In addition, I would like to specifically honor Perry Bennet Schmitt, who has delivered mail to my District Office since I was first elected to Congress in 2000. My staff and I look forward to his daily visits where he brightens our day with jokes and stories. Perry has served the people of Saint Paul as a letter carrier for 28 years and has delivered mail on his current route for over twenty. It takes him six hours to deliver mail each day to over 350 stops. Perry is a designated letter carrier trainer and during his time with the Post Office has trained over a hundred carriers. He is also an active member of Local 28 of the National Association of Letter Carriers, which represents over 1,000 members.

I want to thank Perry and all letter carriers for their dedication and urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

HONORING COUNCILMAN GENE BELMARES

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. CUELLAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Councilman Gene Belmares, who will be presented with the Liberty Bell Award by the Laredo-Webb County Bar Association on May 9, 2008.

Gene Belmares is the son of a decorated World War II veteran, Ignacio Belmares, and Elvira Belmares. He grew up in Laredo, Texas, and attended United High School and Laredo Junior College. Gene utilized his marketing skills to great effect in his work with some of South Texas's most prestigious companies such as Thomas Petroleum, Arguindegui Oil, and WestWind Homes. Gene is now enjoying his work with the marketing and sales team at the famous La Posada Hotel, one of the oldest hotels in South Texas that is leading the revitalization of downtown Laredo.

Councilman Belmares was elected to the Laredo City Council in 2002, and is seated on the Metropolitan Planning Organization, Water Issues, Sports Venue, and Legislative Committees. He is currently serving as Mayor Pro Tempore, and is responsible for the unprecedented fiscal growth of the City of Laredo for the last 6 years through his work on landmark ordinances and legacy projects. Councilman Belmares also has admirably served the community of Laredo, Texas, through his civic work with the March of Dimes, Muscular Dystrophy, and the American Cancer Society. He enjoys coaching the Gateway Girls Softball League, and the Boys and Girls Club flag football.

Councilman Belmares is a truly deserving recipient of the Liberty Bell Award, which is given out annually by the Laredo-Webb County Bar Association to those who have demonstrated exemplary community service, and contributed to good governance in the community.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to have had this time to recognize the dedication of Councilman Belmares to the City of Laredo, and I thank you for this time.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO HARVEY ALLEN

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise today to honor my friend Harvey Allen by entering his name in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the official record of the proceedings and debates of the United States Congress since 1873. Today I pay tribute to

Harvey Allen for his service as an educator in the Nevada higher education system for over thirty years.

Harvey served as a full time professor of Broadcasting, English, Journalism, Speech, Acting, and Theater at the Community College of Southern Nevada for 30 years before retiring at age 75. His dedication to higher education stretched beyond the classroom as he directed the first student produced play at CCSN, served as faculty advisor for the college newspaper, served as a Faculty Senate Member, and established an internship program for Broadcasting and Journalism students. During this time, Harvey also served as a visiting professor at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Harvey's own education includes earning four degrees from Modesto Jr. College, San Diego State University, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

In addition to his work in higher education, Harvey has been influential within the broadcasting community. In 2007, Harvey was inducted into the Nevada Broadcasters Hall of Fame citing his many professional accomplishments which included hosting numerous radio talk shows and writing for several Las Vegas publications.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor the life of Harvey Allen. His dedication to enriching lives through education and broadcasting has touched countless Nevadans. I applaud his efforts and wish him the best in his future endeavors.

TROOPS NEED YOU

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, throughout our history, Americans have risen up to help our troops win wars—from merchants and storekeepers in the Revolutionary War to Rosie the Riveter in World War II. Today, that tradition continues, as average citizens directly support our troops in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

A non-profit charity called Troops Need You delivers resources our troops need—from medical supplies and equipment to school supplies and water purification systems, Troops Need You was founded by a military man himself, Major Eric Egland, an intelligence officer and former counter-terrorism operative who has served around the world, including in Afghanistan and Iraq. He knows what it takes to win.

Troops Need You has already mobilized over one thousand Americans, and is based on innovations so effective that they earned not only a partnership with General David Petraeus but even praise from the President of the United States himself.

We are at a critical point in Iraq, defeating the terrorists to deny them a safe haven to attack American families and our allies. Success requires more Americans to rise up and help our troops succeed. A great way to do that is through Troops Need You.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN SCHWARTZ

HON. MARILYN N. MUSGRAVE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mrs. MUSGRAVE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the heroism and self sacrifice of firefighter John Schwartz, 38, who died in the line of duty on Tuesday, April 15, 2008, while driving to the scene of a brush fire threatening a nearby community.

When John heard the distress call Tuesday afternoon from nearby Ordway, Colorado, he jumped in his fire engine with Fire Chief Terry DeVore to try to help. A massive wild fire was burning across the prairie and the smoke was so thick that John and Terry could not see the bridge burned out in front of them. Terry's father Bruce, a fire department volunteer, was right behind them when he noticed their tail lights disappear. Bruce and the other firefighters stopped and tried to fight the inferno in front of them, but it was a hopeless fight.

John and Terry were good friends and worked together at the Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility and John had recently joined Olney Springs' volunteer fire department. John's father told a newspaper that John joined the department because he liked the idea of doing something for the community. John attended Centennial High School in Pueblo, Colorado, and served in the U.S. Air Force for 4 years before returning to the Fowler area. John raised horses, cattle, and goats on a small ranch and he loved to hunt and shoot with his sons, ages 4 to 15, John, Wyatt, Wesley, and Cody.

John left behind his four boys, as well as his parents John and Toni Schwartz.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to represent John and other men and women who sacrifice so much to care for their communities. I urge my colleagues to join me in mourning the loss of a great American and in expressing heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation for the service of John Schwartz.

RECOGNIZING WAPSIE VALLEY WARRIORS VOLLEYBALL TEAM

HON. BRUCE L. BRALEY

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding results achieved by the Wapsie Valley Warriors volleyball team at the State volleyball tournament in Cedar Rapids this past fall.

Wapsie Valley and Holy Trinity were tied at two games apiece going into the final match. With the game tied at 12, Wapsie Valley got a big hit from Carly Wehling and a tip by Eryca Hingtgen to get a match point at 14–12. Holy Trinity fought off the match point with a spike, but Wehling finished out the game with her 13th and final kill of the match.

The third ranked Wapsie Valley (39–1) won the first two games and withstood a Holy Trinity comeback to earn a 27–25, 26–24, 22–25, 20–25, 15–13 victory and their second straight Class 1A State volleyball championship. I congratulate the Warriors on their hard fought victory.

Madam Speaker, I am extremely proud of the accomplishments of the Warrior volleyball team, both on and off the court, and I am proud to serve them in Congress.

CONGRATULATING AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate American University of Antigua & Barbuda on its newly announced initiative establishing a school that will address the nursing shortage occurring in the United States and abroad.

The American University of Antigua & Barbuda aims to create a nursing school that provides Caribbean nationals with a place to pursue higher education in the healthcare industry as well as an alternative location of study for international students. Through its' historic affiliation with CUNY's Lehman College, AUA hopes to improve the medical standards of care throughout the Caribbean. The program allows AUA students who have completed their Associates Degree in Nursing with the option to transition directly into the baccalaureate program at the Lehman college for a mere 2 years. In a time when there is a 6 year wait list to attend nursing college, the creation of this program serves a model to produce more qualified nurses in an attempt to alleviate the nursing shortage. AUA also hopes to provide students with scholarships, in order to allow those people from lower-income families to pursue higher education.

It is my sincere hope that other Colleges and Universities around the world will join the American University of Antigua & Barbuda in providing feasible alternatives to the nursing shortage, while simultaneously allowing minorities and people from lower income families to further their education.

TRIBUTE TO SHAWNEE MISSION SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Dr. Marjorie Kaplan, Superintendent of the Shawnee Mission School District, who is retiring at the end of this school year, after 16 years of extraordinary leadership for her district, and for the greater Kansas City area.

Dr. Kaplan came to Shawnee Mission in 1992 after a distinguished career in Arizona. She is returning to the Phoenix area where she will be close to her children and grandchildren.

My congressional district is blessed with some of the best schools in the country. I know many Members of Congress feel that way, but I know this is the case. Where I live, among many outstanding school districts, Shawnee Mission schools remain the gold