

Clarendon, VT, sought a way to show their support for Americans stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the town's elementary school, 39 children of the ages of 7 to 10 recorded a song called "Box of Kisses" for our troops in the National Guard. With the help of two local musicians, James Mee and Michael Mugrage, the students of Clarendon Elementary School devoted their lunch and recess time to this project. Students also spent their free time handcrafting more than 500 paper boxes filled with brief personal messages and pieces of candy as tokens of their thanks for the sacrifices being made by these Vermonters serving abroad.

Although Box of Kisses is being sent to hundreds of soldiers, this community's project is a highly personal act for many families in Clarendon. Within this school community of only 198 students, 12 people have family members serving in Afghanistan. Marcelle and I are so proud of and grateful for our Nation's servicemembers and their families. So are Vermonters in every community throughout our State, who are showing support for our soldiers' families in ways small and large every day—by mowing lawns, babysitting, shoveling sidewalks, and through many other small kindnesses. Clarendon's story is another example of why I am proud to be a Vermonter.

I ask unanimous consent that there be printed in the RECORD an article, published in the Rutland Herald, in which reporter Cristina Kumka tells this heartening story from Clarendon.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Rutland Herald, July 14, 2010]

LOVE IN A BOX: VERMONT RESIDENTS SEND
KISSES TO AFGHANISTAN
(By Cristina Kumka)

All it took was one small Vermont community and one song to connect troops overseas with home.

Shortly after Vermont's largest military deployment since World War II occurred this January, residents of Clarendon and students from the town's elementary school wanted to do something for 10 families in their community with loved ones sent off to battle in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Children in grades 2-6, some of whom with mothers or fathers serving overseas, recorded a song by Rutland musician James Mee and fellow artist Michael Mugrage called "Box of Kisses" and made 200 CDs.

Then they crafted boxes using simple white paper and crayons and filled each one with a note and red, white and blue candy donated by the Vermont Country Store.

The children wrote what they knew—a simple "thank you," "I love you" or other thought—to remind 500 troops individually what their purpose there was and how much their sacrifice meant to the children.

Most of the project was documented—the song posted on Internet and aired on public access television and student fundraisers for materials and support filmed on DVDs.

The CDs and the boxes are in the process of being airlifted or parachuted in to troops in populated or desolate areas of the Middle East until each gift is gone.

What began as simple gestures intended to remind troops of home has caught the attention of Americans across the country.

Mee said that in all in his 30 years in the music industry no other tune or project has drawn so much attention.

On Tuesday, Mee said he's been contacted by a major candy company looking to invest in the children's idea, a top music industry professional from New York and a Texas-based radio station serving a million military personnel and other listeners in more than 177 countries.

"I feel like I'm in a Disney movie," Mee said.

The song he originally created 10 years ago as a love ballad with the lyrics, "When you're far from home, Feeling like you're all alone, Don't be afraid . . . cause you're always with us, When you open up your box of kisses," has never been so popular.

But the exposure is mere icing on a larger cake, Mee said.

"The kids are singing their hearts out, many who skipped recess and lunch, and there's something about that," Mee said. "No matter how skeptical and cynical you may be, kids singing like that just melts your heart."

Clarendon's Maria Stephan is hand-delivering one of the boxes and a copy of the song to First Sgt. Francisco Herrera, for his three children. Two of his children, Abigail and D.J., attend Clarendon Elementary School and were key members of the volunteer project.

The project was a way for them to keep their dad close to home even when he's away.

Stephan, a strategic planner with the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization who directly reports to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, said the troops need reminders of home and America needs a reminder of them.

"People (some troops) have a sense when they come back that it's a forgotten war," Stephan said.

"With the whole McChrystal (former Gen. Stanley McChrystal) thing . . . sometimes the dangerous stuff gets forgotten," she said. "It's nice to know people do care."

STRONG FAMILY 50TH REUNION

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the accomplishment of a truly remarkable American family. This summer, the Strong family celebrates their 50th family reunion here in Washington, DC, the site of their first annual reunion. Although the rich history of the Strong family has been centered in the Mid-Atlantic States, I am proud that one of their daughters, Cindy Strong Woolfolk, has been a dedicated member of my staff, and served the people of New Hampshire for more than 11 years. In recognition of Cindy and her extraordinary family, Kathy and I offer our congratulations on this momentous occasion.

In the summer of 1960, Addie Cora Strong Dixon had a vision to honor and remember the life and legacy of her family by convening the first of many annual reunions. That first year's motto, "Strong bond of love and support", which so aptly describes Addie's love for her family, would also characterize the subsequent reunions held throughout the country and attended widely by members of her family. This year's motto for the Golden Anniversary Reunion, "Celebrating Generations of a STRONG Legacy," serves as

reminder to the next generations of Strong children to continue this important tradition and carry on the legacy of their family.

Throughout the years, the Strong annual reunion has become a major event not only for family members, but also for various notables who helped to shape our country's history including Federal, State and local politicians. One such notable, Rosa Parks, attended the 1993 family reunion in Detroit. I am also told that Addie's famous pineapple upside down cakes and the family's North Carolina-style BBQ are some of the best in the country.

On behalf of Kathy and myself, we extend our congratulations to Cindy Strong Woolfolk and her family. For those in the U.S. Senate family who have had the pleasure of getting to know Cindy and experience her laughter and warm personality, you have gained a sense of how special the Strong family is through her.

We applaud the Strong family for reaching this significant milestone and wish them strength and longevity for many more years to come.

KIMBERLEY PROCESS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I wish to express my concern about the future of the Kimberley Process, the global voluntary initiative to stem the flow of conflict diamonds. Last week, key members of the Kimberley Process, including governments, industry representatives, and civil society groups, met in St. Petersburg to break the deadlock over whether Zimbabwe should be certified to export its diamonds. A year ago, a review mission of the Kimberley Process traveled to Zimbabwe and documented extensive smuggling of diamonds and abuses against civilians by police and army forces at diamond sites. This rightly led to Zimbabwe's suspension from the process. However, Zimbabwe has threatened to continue with its exports regardless, and there has been a push by some Kimberley Process members to reinstate its certification.

Last week's meeting resulted in an agreement allowing Zimbabwe to export a limited number of diamonds on the condition that a new Kimberley Process Review Mission is permitted to return to the country and monitor conditions. This may be a workable agreement on paper, but it can only succeed with the good faith efforts of all parties, not least the Government of Zimbabwe. I am disappointed that members of the Kimberley Process did not take a stronger stand against certifying Zimbabwe's diamonds for export. Without proof that the government in question has changed the conditions that resulted in suspension, granting certification may be undermining the core components of the process. The onus should be on a government to prove such change has occurred before it is reinstated, not after. Now if this agreement is not implemented, I worry

that it will be a significant blow to the credibility of the process.

Zimbabwe is not the only country raising issues that threaten the credibility of the Kimberley Process. Last month, the Wall Street Journal reported that there continue to be abuses and killings by soldiers and private security guards in Angola around diamond mines. Angola is reportedly the world's fifth-largest diamond producer in terms of overall value. Meanwhile, the United Nations Expert Group on Cote D'Ivoire has reported for years on how groups in northern Cote D'Ivoire continue to extract and smuggle diamonds through neighboring countries in violation of UN sanctions. Diamond smuggling is also reportedly rampant in Venezuela, while the government there continues to evade the Kimberley Process. Across these countries and many others, weak government controls and limited enforcement options are enabling illicit diamonds to continue to enter the legitimate trade.

The inability of the Kimberley Process to effectively address these problems has exposed significant loopholes within the process. To begin with, the Kimberley Process defines "conflict diamonds" as "rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments." While this definition may have made sense in light of the civil wars in countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia, it does not capture abuses and violence perpetrated today by government forces in diamond-producing areas around the world. In addition, the process lacks a clear, agreed-upon approach for dealing with cases of noncompliance like Venezuela or Zimbabwe. As we move into the 10th year of Kimberley's existence, we need to take a serious look at how we can best ensure the certification scheme has real power to investigate, monitor, and curb the illegal flow of diamonds, including ensuring serious consequences when a country does not live up to its commitments.

Since its inception, I have strongly supported the Kimberley Process as a vehicle to stop the trade in conflict diamonds and protect consumers and legitimate diamond producers from unwittingly participating in abuses. And the Kimberley Process has achieved a great deal in this respect, despite being a voluntary process and thereby having obvious limitations. But now I strongly believe we need to see the Kimberley Process recommit to its human rights agenda at the same time that it deals with the technical and procedural challenges that hamper its effectiveness. We still have a long way to go in curbing the flow of conflict diamonds and ensuring they do not make their way into our markets.

For these reasons, I believe we must look seriously at the effectiveness of the Kimberley Process and consider revamping its framework so it has real teeth. Doing so will require strong leadership, and I believe the United

States as the world's largest consumer of diamonds and a key player in the creation of the process is well positioned to provide that leadership. Senator LEAHY and I have urged the Obama administration to put the United States forward to be vice-chair of the Kimberley Process for 2011 and thus chair in 2012. It is in our national interest to have a strong Kimberley Process, and it is a critical moment for the United States to exhibit leadership to that end.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CLEAN WATER AGENCIES

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I wish to recognize and share with my colleagues an important milestone for the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, NACWA. The association celebrates its 40th anniversary at its annual summer conference and meeting July 20 to 23 in San Francisco. This year's conference, "Sustainable Resource Management—Lessons from Clean Water's Past and Present," will surely inspire new solutions and innovative ideas to improve our country's water quality and protect the health of our children and families.

Established in 1970 by a group of individuals representing 22 large municipal sewerage agencies, NACWA now represents over 300 of the Nation's publicly owned wastewater utilities. NACWA grew up alongside the landmark Clean Water Act of 1972, which has been enormously successful at reducing pollution into our Nation's waterways. The 22 founding agencies of NACWA united behind a related mission: to secure investment in municipal wastewater treatment and improve water quality. As NACWA continued to grow and diversify, they have worked to promote watershed management and the health of our ecosystems.

Today, NACWA has an active membership of publicly owned treatment agencies stretching from coast to coast. NACWA provides its members with educational resources, community building, networking opportunities, and a forum for sharing best practices and building consensus on water policy.

I am so pleased to acknowledge NACWA's long and distinguished record of environmental advocacy. Clean, safe drinking water is essential to all of us. The association has been a leader on a range of issues affecting our water supply. Over the course of my career in the Senate, I have had the pleasure of working with NACWA on important legislation including the Water Infrastructure Financing Act and the Water Resources Development Act.

In 2008, I was honored to receive NACWA's Legislative Leadership Award for my efforts on the Water Resources Development Act, WRDA, of

2007. This historic legislation is of critical importance to our Nation's water quality and economy. WRDA 2007 garnered broad support on both sides of the aisle, and I am again working with my colleagues to pass a WRDA bill that will build on the important progress we made in WRDA 2007, continue investment in vital water resources projects, and create jobs rebuilding the Nation's aging water infrastructure.

I commend the members and staff of NACWA for their dedication and support for policies that advance clean water and a healthy, sustainable environment. Their efforts have certainly had a positive impact on our Nation's environmental policy and water quality. I look forward to working with NACWA to improve our Nation's water quality, ecosystems and infrastructure for years to come by supporting legislation that protects our Nation's waterways and water supply. Together, we can ensure clean water for future generations. Please join me in celebrating the 40th anniversary of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:05 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 4684. An act to require the Secretary of the Treasury to strike medals in I commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States and the establishment of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center.

H.R. 4842. An act to authorize appropriations for the Directorate of Science and Technology of the Department of Homeland Security for fiscal years 2011 and 2012, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5266. An act to extend the final report deadline and otherwise reauthorize the National Commission on Children and Disasters.

H.R. 5301. An act to extend the period during which the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and States are prohibited from requiring a permit under section 402 of the Federal Water Pollution