

years and somehow see how my son might have grown. It's kind of a reminder, and it helps with the grieving process to plant something in memory of someone you love."

Almost two decades later, Jacob's spirit remains ever-present in the magnificent 20-foot cherry spruce tree that Rebecca hopes will bring a joyful light to the community on Fountain Square. "Over the years, it just grew and grew," she says. "It's a beautiful, well-rounded tree and would make a wonderful Christmas tree."

On December 3, Jacob's Tree was scheduled to be lit for the first time in Fountain Square in a special tree-lighting ceremony during this year's annual Christmas parade. In the spirit of the season, Jacob's family hopes that the community will come together around the tree and share in its joy. "Christmas is a time of giving," Rebecca said.

The story of Jacob's Tree and the selflessness of the Akin family is truly inspirational. I would like to extend my personal blessing to Jacob's mother, Rebecca Buis, his father, David Akin, and his brother, Abraham Akin, this holiday season. And I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in wishing the family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. It is my hope that the tree brings them comfort, and that it shine especially bright in honor of young Jacob.

The Commonwealth Journal, a Somerset-area publication, recently published an article telling the story of Jacob's Tree. I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Commonwealth Journal, Nov. 25, 2011]

'JACOB'S TREE' WILL WARM THE SPIRIT THIS SEASON

(By Chris Harris)

The Christmas season is seen as a time of miracles, a time of redemption for mankind.

This year, one of Somerset's proudest symbols of the Christmas tradition will be its own miracle of sorts—a chance to redeem joy and light out of the clouds of tragedy.

The Christmas tree in the town's Fountain Square is scheduled to be lit in a special ceremony on Saturday, December 3, as is the annual custom.

This year's tree comes from the yard of Rebecca Buis, known to local bank customers as a branch manager and loan officer at First & Farmers National Bank in Somerset.

Anyone who has driven down Denham Street lately has probably noticed the towering cherry spruce standing out with its bold green hue, even as the trees around it have shed their leaves and stand bare and bland.

The tree was planted around the holiday season of 1995—one year after a horrific accident that changed Buis's life forever.

On December 6, 1994, Jacob Akin, Buis's 5-year-old son, was killed in what his mother can only call a "freak accident."

Jacob and his brother Abraham, who was 10 at the time, were playing in a house on Newton Street in Ferguson that their father was in the process of razing.

"(The father, David Akin) did construction work," said Buis. "This wasn't anything that was new to (the children). They were used to playing around that kind of stuff."

This time, however, was different.

After Abraham exited the structure to ask his father a question, a chimney crumbled and collapsed on top of young Jacob.

A parent's worst nightmare had come to pass—and during the holiday season meant to be a happy time for families.

The memories remain painful to this day.

"They couldn't find my son underneath the bricks," recalled Buis, who still finds herself overcome with emotion when talking about the incident. "They had to pull them off brick by brick until they found him."

According to then-county coroner Alan Stringer, Jacob died of multiple skull fractures as a result of the toppled bricks. Buis noted that Jacob's neck was broken immediately, which meant that death came quickly. This and the fact that Abraham survived provided the only sources of solace in that terrible time.

"My worry was that he suffered, and they told me he had not," said Buis. "I'm lucky in the sense that I felt like God could have taken both my boys that day, playing in the house together. I could have lost them both."

Still, the holiday season was unalterably affected for Buis and her family.

"I wasn't able to focus on Christmas at all," said Buis. "We didn't put up a tree that year."

For one thing, Buis felt like she had to stay strong for her other son's sake. The necessity of putting on a brave face took its own toll on the devastated mother.

"You have to carry on because you have two children," she said. "Kids grieve differently. It's not an easy thing to deal with; kids don't usually tell you, but they feel responsible. I tried hard not to show grief because I didn't want (Abraham) to feel responsible. Nobody could have done anything. It was a freak accident."

Buis recalls Jacob, in kindergarten at Hopkins Elementary at the time, as "a funny little young man," as well as one who was both handsome and intelligent.

"He was a very smart young man," she said. "He understood lots of things, I think."

The calendar pages turned, and soon enough, it was the Christmas season again. Buis decided it would be appropriate to pay some kind of tribute to Jacob, and decided to plant the household Christmas tree, only about five feet tall at the time, in the ground outside their home.

"We decided to put up the tree in memory of my son," she said. "I felt like as the tree grew, I could keep up with the years and somehow see how my son might have grown. Every time I would pull in the driveway, I would see the tree."

"It's kind of a reminder," she added. "It helps with the grieving process to plant something in memory of someone you love."

Today, the majestic tree stands about 20 feet tall. It's "reached its potential," as Buis put it, and has "overgrown the place."

As such, Buis decided it might be the perfect time to inquire about donating "Jacob's Tree," as it's called, to use on the Fountain Square as the county's official Christmas tree. County officials happily obliged.

"Over the years, it just grew and grew," said Buis. "I'd been thinking for some time about (donating it), and just decided, 'You know, it's time to cut the tree down.'"

Buis said she also took Abraham's feelings into consideration. Now 27, still in Pulaski County working in construction, Abraham "thinks it's a good idea," according to Buis, but she wanted to make sure he was okay with the choice to donate the tree given the effect Jacob's death had on him as well.

Much as the tree reached its adult size, Jacob would have been 22 years old this year. However, his legacy has managed to live on in other ways as well.

After Jacob's death, Buis decided to donate his corneas and heart valves to help save the lives of other individuals. "(Christmas) is a time of giving," she said, noting that Jacob's untimely passing was able to give hope to others.

"I received letters telling me that one of Jacob's corneas went to a child who was born with a birth defect, and another went to an older man in his 60s with an eye injury from a work accident," said Buis. "His heart valves also went to adults. I didn't realize how important heart valves were to people who need them (until then)."

"It's a hard decision to make because you have to make it quickly," she added, referring to the decision to donate Jacob's organs. "You can't think about it for days. You have to know at the time of death, and it's a very hard time."

Just as Jacob's body was donated to bring a new light of hope to those in need, his spirit remains in the tree that has now been donated to bring a similarly joyful light to the community.

"It's a beautiful tree," said Buis. "It's well-rounded and would make a wonderful Christmas tree."

Citizens can see "Jacob's Tree" lit for the first time on December 3. The annual Christmas parade, sponsored and organized by the Chamber of Commerce, begins at 5 p.m. with the tree lighting activities set for 7 p.m.

As a Chamber Ambassador, Buis is looking forward to the yearly festivities that are so beloved by locals—but especially since she will get to see that special memorial to her son shining in all its glory.

"I just hope that (those who see it) will enjoy the tree and that it will be beautifully decorated," said Buis. "I hope that people will get a warm feeling from the tree, and know that it's given in a good spirit."

COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about Computer Science Education Week, which began on December 4, 2011, and continues until December 10, 2011. This celebration includes events in my home State of Pennsylvania that advance the teaching and learning of computer science. These activities help to engage students and build their interest in a field that promises good jobs in a rapidly expanding sector. The week also draws attention to the critical need for strong computer science education in our schools.

E-mails, text messages, financial transactions, cell phone calls and doctor's visits are just a few of the activities that rely on computer science. In the last 20 years, we have undergone a technological revolution that has transformed industry, created entirely new segments of the economy, and transformed our daily lives. Pennsylvania's high-tech industry has played a crucial role in this growth, and we must prepare the next generation to continue innovating. The events of Computer Science Education Week help to build momentum for students to learn computer science.

In Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, which boasts one of the best

computer science and informatics programs in the country, will host high school students and expose them to the multitude of academic and professional opportunities in computer science. At Emmaus High School in Emmaus, young people will demonstrate programmable robots and hear from alumni who have successfully pursued careers in computer science, all while honoring computing pioneer Grace Hopper with a birthday cake. Even the White House is celebrating Computer Science Education Week by honoring the week's organizers and representatives of the Computer Science Teachers Association as "Champions of Change."

I have introduced S. 1614, the Computer Science Education Act, to help students develop the skills to compete for the growing number of jobs in computer science. Our Nation's economy and security depend upon computing professionals, but the current pipeline of graduates will satisfy only 52 percent of the more than 1.4 million computing job openings expected by 2018. The other 48 percent of these jobs will either go unfilled or move to other countries. America should continue to lead in the high-tech sector by preparing students to take these well-paying jobs. This legislation would strengthen computer science education in elementary and high schools by ensuring that students not only use technology but also learn the technical skills needed to work in computer science and grow our economy.

Computer Science Education Week will help to increase the interest of students who will invent the next mobile technology or start the next technology company. This week was established in 2009 by the Computing in the Core Coalition, a group of organizations, companies, and scientific societies that strive to advocate for computer science as a core academic subject. Computer Science Education Week coincides with the birthday of Grace Murray Hopper, a pioneer in computer science, who was born on December 9, 1906. She rose to the rank of rear admiral in the U.S. Navy, engineered new programming languages and developed standards for computer systems that laid the foundation for many computer science advances.

The economy of the future and the jobs that will accompany it demand that we prepare our students to remain competitive as leaders in the high-tech global marketplace. For that reason, I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing Computer Science Education Week and to cosponsor the Computer Science Education Act.

HOOVER POWER ALLOCATION ACT

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the importance of the Hoover Power Allocation Act of 2011, of which I am a cosponsor.

This legislation passed the Congress after a multiyear effort led by Senator HARRY REID, the bill's lead author, and I thank him for his work.

Upon enactment, Californians will be able to continue buying Hoover Dam's power at the cost of production for the next 50 years.

The legislation allows the people of southern California whose local governments and utilities signed the 50-year contracts that made building Hoover Dam possible to receive 56 percent of the energy produced by the dam for another five decades.

For the people of my State, the Hoover Dam has been a consistent supply of affordable, pollution-free power for decades. The Hoover Dam is one of the largest power plants in the United States, with a capacity of 2,080 megawatts approximately the size of each of California's nuclear powerplants.

Its average production between 1999 and 2008 was about 4.2 billion kilowatt-hours per year, approximately 2.4 billion kilowatt hours of which goes to southern Californians who buy their power from Southern California Edison, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, or members of the Southern California Public Power Agency.

Hoover's power also plays an essential role moving water into parched and populous southern California.

The Metropolitan Water District uses Hoover's power to move its 550,000 acrefeet annual allocation of water from the Colorado River, over five desert mountain ranges, to Los Angeles.

Without Hoover's power, the Metropolitan Water District's cost of moving that water would be inordinately more expensive.

And if California rate payers had to buy that much power at market rates instead of Hoover Dam's 2.5 cents per kilowatt hour cost of production, it would cost approximately \$180 million more each year.

And that power would likely come from dirtier, more distant sources, including coal plants.

Instead, continued access to Hoover's low-cost, renewable hydropower will keep rates low as California's utilities bring on new, more expensive renewable power to comply with the State's 33-percent renewable portfolio standard.

The legislation also sets up a process through which new power recipients in California will be determined by the Western Area Power Administration.

As explained in the House committee report accompanying this bill, Congress expects the agency to conduct an open hearing and review the process to determine power allocations fairly and equitably.

The process should provide the opportunity for irrigation districts, rural electric cooperatives, and other eligible entities to receive allocations.

Congress also expects that Western Area Power Administration will evaluate the relevant power requests of potential new Hoover power recipients in an open, thorough, and transparent

process to assess both the applicants' power needs and the classes of customers they serve.

The agency should make allocation determinations in an impartial, unbiased, and objective manner, consistent with State and Federal preference standards, and in a way that provides the most benefit to the most Californians.

My colleagues and I also expect that the process and analytical results will be documented and made available for review.

Finally, no discussion of Hoover Dam would be complete without acknowledging efforts to protect endangered species.

Hoover contractors have committed to providing more than \$150 million over 50 years to support the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program for the protection of 26 endangered, threatened and sensitive species.

The legislation authorizing the MSCP was enacted in the 111th Congress and signed into law on March 30, 2009.

I thank the parties for reaching this agreement.

The Hoover Dam is an American success story. And it is a renewable energy success story.

During the depths of the Great Depression, Americans stepped forward to help build one of the great engineering marvels of all time.

Between 1931 and 1936, our Nation made a massive effort involving thousands of workers more than 100 of whom lost their lives to build a powerplant unlike anything the world had ever seen.

Many in Congress at the time argued the cost of Hoover Dam was too high.

They argued that government should not be making such large investments in infrastructure.

They opposed efforts to invest in an unproven energy technology like hydropower.

The debate was strikingly similar to debates we are having in this body today.

Luckily for the people of California, believers in American infrastructure and technology won the Hoover Dam debate.

The U.S. Congress provided Federal funds, but only after the Department of the Interior arranged power contracts at prices sufficient to both, No. 1, cover the operating and maintenance charges and, No. 2 repay the capital appropriated by the U.S. Congress within 50 years.

When the communities and utilities of California, led by the City of Los Angeles, stepped forward to sign those contracts, construction began.

As the years have passed, the investment has been repaid and the wisdom of Congress's decision has become apparent.

And now we have enacted a law that continues the legacy of Hoover Dam.

I thank the generations before us for having the foresight to fund the Hoover