

she confronted her illness by continuing to be the same kind, caring person she had always been, living life to the fullest right up to the end. Denise Addison was truly one of a kind, beloved and missed by everyone who had the pleasure of being her friend.

Thank you, Denise, for who you were and for all you did for me, for my staff, and, most important, for the State of Nebraska. The "good life" will not be quite the same without you.

TRIBUTE TO COMMANDER BRYAN E. HELLER

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I am so proud to rise today to honor a Nevadan whom I have known for my entire life and who has my utmost admiration and respect. It is with great pleasure to recognize my brother, Bryan Heller, as he retires from the U.S. Navy after 20 years of service to his State and country. On June 1, 2012, he will enter the next chapter of his life, and I am thrilled to see what he will accomplish next. On behalf of a grateful nation, I thank Bryan for his many years of faithful, selfless service and extend heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of his retirement.

Bryan began his naval career while studying civil engineering at Brigham Young University. In 1992, he entered the Navy in the Nuclear Propulsion Officer Candidate Program and was later commissioned at Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI. Bryan successfully completed the rigorous nuclear pipeline and submarine school and subsequently reported to the USS Georgia, where he earned his gold dolphins and qualified as nuclear engineer officer.

Over the course of his career, Bryan and his family moved across the country to respond to his next call of duty. Returning to his civil engineering roots, he transferred to the Civil Engineering Corps, CEC, where he experienced his first CEC tour aboard the NAS Oceana and became registered as a professional engineer. He also earned his master of science in civil engineering from the University of Texas. In 2007, Bryan reported to Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, where he headed the Navy's construction program in Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Jordan, and Lebanon.

Currently serving as the desert operation officer, Bryan leads the Desert Integrated Product Team, which supports Navy bases outside of San Diego and Ventura County. Bryan continues to be an incredible asset to the naval community, and I know it will be difficult to replace him. Throughout his career, Bryan has been extensively decorated, exemplifying his strong work ethic and commitment to serve. He has been awarded three Meritorious Service Medals, three Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, and two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals.

Today, it is also my distinct honor to recognize and express my gratitude to

Bryan's family—his wife, Kristi, and children, Natascha, Heidi, Josef, and Jakob. Their strength during times when their family was apart embodies the resilience that makes our military communities strong. I constantly find myself in awe of the sacrifices and efforts that have been made by our military families. Each and every deployment causes great stress and a burden of separation that every member of these families experience. We must remember that these families serve as the backbone for the men and women who wear the uniform of our armed services, and they deserve our support. The invaluable sacrifices of our servicemembers and their families are debts that can never fully be repaid.

I am proud to honor my brother today and recognize his accomplished career in the U.S. Navy. On the eve of this Memorial Day holiday weekend, we must recognize all our brave servicemembers and their commitment to our country. It is with great appreciation that I ask my colleagues to stand with me in honoring Bryan's service to our Nation as he moves onto the next phase of his life.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

DENVER GAY MEN'S CHORUS

• Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate the Denver Gay Men's Chorus on its 30th anniversary. For the last 30 years, the group has shown great commitment to educational, cultural, and social enrichment in the community on behalf of the Rocky Mountain Arts Association.

Since the Denver Gay Men's Chorus was formed in 1982, it has performed more than 130 concerts and more than 1,400 compositions, arrangements, and medleys. The group has commissioned 25 works. It performed at the 1996 World Summer Olympics in Atlanta at the opening of the Olympic Diversity Center. It has also received the Denver Mayor's Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Today, the organization has more than 170 volunteer singers who perform at numerous community outreach events every year. They include performances at Manhattan Middle School's Diversity Week to end school bullying and a performance at the World AIDS Day Concert.

I join the State of Colorado in thanking this organization for working to address social issues and spread a message of tolerance and for enriching our community and our State. I look forward to its future work and the effect it will continue to have on our community.●

RECOGNIZING THE WORLD TRADE CENTER UTAH

• Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate the World Trade Center Utah on the naming of one of

Utah's finest buildings in their honor. On May 23, 2012, my Utah staff had the pleasure of attending a ceremony whereby the building formerly known as Eagle Gate Tower became the World Trade Center at City Creek. Naming one of Salt Lake's premier business addresses after the World Trade Center Utah is a fitting tribute to the important role the organization plays in guiding Utah's world-leading companies into new markets. This achievement is all the more remarkable when you consider that the organization was only founded in 2006.

We hear time and time again about the fact that 95 percent of our potential consumers live outside the United States. But we all know that reaching those customers can be difficult. Since 2006, the World Trade Center Utah has assisted over 1,000 companies to do just that, through educational classes and seminars, international business development events, and networking opportunities. The World Trade Center Utah rightly prides itself on being the "first stop" for Utah businesses seeking to expand their trade opportunities. By assessing their capabilities, providing educational opportunities and connections to the right people and organizations, the World Trade Center Utah provides the businesses of the Beehive State a much needed roadmap to engaging in international trade.

Their hard work has paid off. Thanks in no small part to the World Trade Center Utah and the leadership of its CEO, Lew Cramer, Utah merchandise exports increased 37 percent in 2011 compared to 2010, growing from \$13.8 billion to \$18.9 billion. In a time of great economic difficulty for our Nation, this was no easy feat and was no doubt welcome news to the nearly 93,000 Utahns whose jobs depend on exports, as well as the companies in Utah which collectively exported to over 190 foreign markets.

I congratulate the World Trade Center Utah, as well as its founding CEO, Lew Cramer, and his dedicated staff for this achievement.●

KEEPING CHILDREN ALCOHOL FREE

• Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed the attached statement in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

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

RECOGNIZING THE LEADERSHIP TO KEEP CHILDREN ALCOHOL FREE FOUNDATION

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, today it is my honor to recognize the accomplishments of a group of dedicated volunteers who have devoted extensive time, resources and energy toward the worthy effort of helping our children avoid the pitfalls of alcohol dependence and binge drinking. The Leadership To Keep Children Alcohol Free Foundation is a unique coalition of current and former Governors' spouses, Federal agencies, and public and private organizations united in their goal to prevent the use of alcohol by children

ages nine to fifteen. It is the only national effort that focuses on alcohol use in this age group. Childhood drinking leads to adolescent alcohol abuse, and in my state of North Dakota, I want to acknowledge that the rate of alcohol abuse among young people is an ongoing challenge that we must address. For this reason especially, I am motivated by a sense of duty and public concern to extend my gratitude to the volunteers of this Foundation and enter into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a comprehensive summary of the accomplishments and impact that this Foundation has achieved from 2000 to 2012 for the families of my state and our nation.

I would like to provide some background on how this Foundation came to be. In partnership with The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and in response to childhood drinking as a national public health threat, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), an institute of the National Institutes of Health charged with research on alcohol abuse and its causes, the many medical and social consequences of heavy drinking, and approaches to new prevention and treatment, established the Leadership Initiative in 2000. The initiative would engage First Spouses in each state, with the underlying assumption that top-level state leadership could serve as a collective and powerful force to bring the scope and dangers of early alcohol use to the public's attention and to mobilize National, State, and local action to prevent it. And thus, it was launched as a national initiative in 2000 and subsequently evolved in 2004 as The Leadership To Keep Children Alcohol Free Foundation with a non-profit, non-partisan membership of over 50 current and former governors' spouses.

The seamless transition from the Initiative into the Foundation enabled the work of the Leadership Initiative to continue without interruption. Its purpose, membership, and accomplishments remained the same. That is, its purpose is to support the efforts of current Governor's spouses or their representatives, both in their states and nationally, to prevent or reduce underage drinking, especially among the 9–15 year old population.

This multiyear, multimillion-dollar initiative provided support to participating Governors' spouses, who conveyed the initiative's messages within their States and nationally through State policy briefings, outreach to and through the media, broad distribution of educational materials and public service announcements, and personal appearances. Both the RWJ and NIAAA funding ended in 2007.

Leadership membership has always been composed of Governors' spouses or their designate that are also prosecutors, judges, educators, business leaders, substance abuse prevention specialists, and parents. They often act as a point of contact in their state conveying news about their state's underage drinking prevention initiatives, and also taking information back to their constituency. The Leadership initiative provides members with a source of information to use as they reach out to these audiences.

At this time, The Leadership Foundation has 26 current spouses as members, 22 emeritus spouses as members, and 20 Partners of like-minded organizations.

I will now offer to you, Mr. President, the major accomplishments of The Leadership Foundation from 2000 through 2011. As originally conceptualized, The Leadership To Keep Children Alcohol Free Foundation has been uniquely qualified to help move the conversation around underage drinking to a higher level and broader audience. Its niche has been its ability to educate and engage policy makers at all levels. Its non-partisan

membership of over 50 current and former governors' spouses has allowed it to influence the debate over childhood drinking both nationally and within states.

It has been remarkably successful in a relatively short time. Many organizations and experts in the field of prevention view the Governors' spouses' work on childhood drinking as key in placing childhood and underage drinking front and center on the national agenda. Often in collaboration with national and state partners, The Leadership Foundation has accomplished our purpose by voicing concerns in national conversations on related issues; providing ongoing support of First Spouse underage prevention activity within their respective states; maintaining timely contact and delivery of information on underage drinking; and distributing resources/tools to assist the efforts of First Spouses in their states.

In the first few years of formation (2000–2005), members of the Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free initiative worked extensively at the federal level in support of a federal collaborative effort to address underage drinking. During that period, members engaged in the following activities: encouraged Congress to call for the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine Report on Underage Drinking; worked with several US Surgeon Generals to produce the Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking; provided information related to the STOP Act of 2006; testified before several Congressional Committees, served as key partners in April is Alcohol Awareness Month activities with the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD); served on the Advisory Councils of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA), Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act, Drug Free Communities Act, and NIAAA's Steering Committee for Underage Drinking Research Initiative, and the board of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA); garnered national media attention in newspapers and magazines; and worked with the National Attorneys General's Association's Youth Access to Alcohol standing committee to convince the alcohol industry not to advertise to youth.

In addition to the aforementioned national accomplishments and activities, the Leadership Foundation provides ongoing service to its membership through such activities as providing ongoing support of underage drinking prevention activities by First Spouses within their respective states.

Annually, a one-day seminar is held for Leadership membership, usually in conjunction with the winter Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) conference. SAMHSA/CSAP and NABCA have been strong supporters of the Prevention Days. In 2010, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, National Institute on Alcohol, Abuse and Alcoholism, National Alcohol Control Beverage Association, Shinnyo-en Foundation, Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police, Paxis Institute, International Survey Associates/Pride Survey, The Christopher D. Smithers Foundation Inc., and State Farm Insurance Company provided financial support for the 10th anniversary education seminar in Washington DC in February. At these annual events, speakers are engaged to provide latest research news on products such as alcohol energy drinks, coalition creation and maintenance, and minimum drinking age laws.

In 2008 and 2009, with financial support from SAMHSA, the Leadership Foundation

organized thirteen state visits for the US Surgeon General to promote his Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking. The Leadership Foundation President, Hope Taft, accompanied the Surgeon General on the visits at the invitation of the First Spouses, and/or their designate. At these state visits, First Spouses convened and encouraged statewide partnerships to address underage drinking within their respective states through such activities as the following:

In Hawaii, the Lieutenant Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr., Co-Chair of Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free, hosted the Surgeon General's visit to Hawaii to promote the Call to Action. They provided media interviews; visited an inner-city Honolulu elementary school, where Lt. Governor Aiona conducted a teach-in, engaging students in an interactive, lively discussion and delivering a presentation on Too Smart to Start, a SAMHSA-sponsored underage alcohol use prevention initiative; met with Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle to discuss the Call to Action; met with the Hawaii Partnership to Prevent Underage Drinking (HPPUD); and attended a Town Hall meeting sponsored by HPPUD at which 120 university researchers, health care providers, Department of Health officials, policymakers, law enforcement personnel, educators, business representatives, members of the faith-based community, youth, and parents were in attendance.

In Maine, the First Lady Karen Baldacci and the Surgeon General met with the Governor and Maine legislators in the Senate and House of Representatives, Maine's Attorney General, and community leaders. The Surgeon General also gave a keynote address at the annual New England School of Addiction Studies. As part of Maine's response to the Call to Action, the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Substance Abuse (OSA) announced the second phase of a statewide media campaign, "Find Out More, Do More," targeted to parents.

In Nebraska, the First Lady Sally Ganem and the Surgeon General provided several speaking engagements with teachers, parents, students, and community leaders. Follow-up activities included the following: twenty-one town hall meetings were held in the spring of 2008; the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission requested that Nebraska wholesalers limit pocket-sized liquor containers until an investigative panel evaluates the product's appeal to youth; the First Lady raised funds to make a video of the Acting Surgeon General's Town Hall Meeting for distribution throughout the State; officials and other stakeholders developed a Nebraska "call to action" on underage drinking; Nebraska Educational Television (NET) developed a 30-minute documentary on underage drinking featuring First Lady Sally Ganem; and the First Lady and University of Nebraska's Coach Bo Pelini developed PSAs to be shown during every high school sports events covered by NET. The PSAs are expected to reach more than 85,000 people with a message about underage drinking.

In New Mexico, the First Lady Barbara Richardson and the Surgeon General provided a medical round table discussion, a public forum in Santa Fe about underage drinking, and a lecture in Albuquerque as part of Governor Bill Richardson's DWI Research Speaker Series.

In North Carolina, during the Surgeon General's visit, the First Lady Mary Easley announced the states "Media Ready" program, a media literacy substance abuse prevention program that is taught in middle schools. They also met with State legislators, policy makers, education leaders, and representatives from the Governor's Office,

the judicial system, law enforcement, and health and substance abuse prevention organizations that work on the State and local levels to address underage drinking in North Carolina. In addition, the Surgeon General spoke about the Call to Action at North Carolina State University's Millennium Seminar.

In North Dakota, the First Lady Mikey Hoeven and the Surgeon General provided an address at the 2007 Alcohol and Substance Abuse Summit in Bismarck and visited a middle school where the Surgeon General spoke to students.

In Ohio, the First Lady Frances Strickland hosted the Surgeon General's visit that included an address to college and university presidents, as well as an address to the prevention and treatment professionals in Ohio.

In Oklahoma, the Surgeon General spoke at several events including a town hall meeting at the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City, and an address at the University of Oklahoma College of Public Health.

In Oregon, the Surgeon General and the Oregon Attorney General spoke at a news conference on underage drinking where the Attorney General announced he was reconstituting a State underage-drinking task force to examine binge drinking on college campuses, energy drinks that contain alcohol, and the possible creation of a driver's license suspension program for minors caught with alcohol.

In Wyoming, the First Lady Nancy Freudenthal hosted the Surgeon General's visit that included a news conference at the annual meeting of the National Prevention Network, a meeting on Wind River Reservation to discuss underage drinking, and participation at a Town Hall Meeting on the Central Wyoming Campus that highlighted not only the Surgeon General's information but also the prevention efforts under way across the State. This event also served as the kick-off meeting for the national Town Halls. In addition, Wyoming Public Television taped a discussion of underage drinking issues including the Surgeon General, Wyoming youth involved in prevention activities, and community members.

In Montana, the First Lady Nancy Schweitzer hosted the Surgeon General's three-day visit to Montana that included several speaking engagements with community groups, teens, and university staff/students; production of a PSA of the Surgeon General and First Lady; and meeting with the Lt Governor and the State Interagency Coordinating Council. Following the Surgeon General's visit, there were twenty-six town hall meetings in Montana on underage drinking.

In Maryland, the First Lady Katie O'Malley and the Surgeon General met with the Lt Governor, Attorney General and several state leaders; gave a press conference; provided remarks to the House and Senate legislators; gave a keynote address and roundtable discussion at the Baltimore Health Department; and attended a meeting with students in a middle school.

In Rhode Island, the First Lady Suzanne Carcieri hosted the Surgeon General's visit that included a meeting with Family Court and Traffic Tribunal Judges with RI Family Court Chief Judge Jeremiah S. Jeremiah who presented information about the Family Court's Alcohol Calendar; a press conference on underage drinking; a meeting with Substance Abuse Task Force Coordinators, State Room, State House; a Lunch with Governor and Mrs. Carcieri in the Governor's Personal Office; a speaking engagement with university presidents, vice presidents, and researchers, hosted by University of Rhode Island President Dr. Robert Carothers; a meeting with Policymakers in Providence, State

Room, State House; an address in both the House of Representatives and Senate; and a Town Hall Meeting in Woonsocket, RI, City Hall.

Additionally, in 2008-2009, through the generosity of Motorola, P&G, and Pride Surveys, the Foundation was able to give stipends to support 25 Town Hall Meetings in member states across the country to focus community attention on underage drinking. These Town Hall Meetings were in addition to the ones funded by SAMHSA/CSAP.

The Leadership also worked with Utah 2009 on a meeting of medical examiners with NIAAA and CDC to see how the routine screening for alcohol use in all deaths of persons under the age of 21 could be actualized.

To accomplish its purpose of supporting First Spouse underage drinking prevention initiatives, the Leadership Foundation has produced weekly email updates, an information-packed website, distribution of opinion editorials, and presentations at national conferences.

The Weekly Update was supported with funding from NIAAA, a Scaife Foundation grant in 2009, and their own resources. The Weekly Update was distributed weekly from 2000-2011 to more than 1,900 individuals. The Update contained timely information on latest research, news from states, new partners, grant and conference information. When a Facebook page was developed, the Leadership decided to use the social media network to distribute timely alerts about underage drinking prevention. The website is also used extensively to distribute information with an average of 400 new visitors each week.

As issues pertaining to underage drinking have arisen, The Leadership Foundation provided Draft Opinion Editorials to First Spouses. First Spouses were encouraged to shape a final draft based on their state data and/or opinions for distribution to their media outlets. The Op Eds were intended to raise awareness in the early 2000's on childhood/underage drinking and more recently on specific issues such as the costs of underage drinking to states, the minimum drinking age laws, and alcohol energy drinks.

The Leadership Foundation has also been recognized as a leader in the area of underage drinking prevention. As such, representatives of the Leadership Foundation have been invited to present at a variety of national and state conferences. These included numerous presentations at the Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws (EUDL) Conference, the Mid-Year CADCA Institute, NPN/NASADAD conference, and state conferences such as the Ohio Prevention and Education Conference.

Since 2000, the Leadership Foundation membership, in particular Advisory Board members, have provided significant support at the national level by prompting the development of important documents such as the Surgeon General's Call to Action [SAMHSA, NIAAA, SG], and a state-level analysis of alcohol costs to the state [NM, CDC].

In addition several products were developed and distributed on-line, at conferences, and in print. All materials are free, and downloadable from the Foundation's website at <http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org>. These have included a statistical brochure for lay audiences which distills the most current research findings about early alcohol use and its effects; a brochure describing three basic strategies for preventing alcohol use by children, and bookmarks on "Stay Smart; Don't Start," a video entitled "Drinking It In," a program for Drug Free Workplace, a discussion guide for communities on childhood drinking and a parent "book club" discussion guide on the book "Messengers in Denim."

Several members of the Leadership Foundation have been recognized for their out-

standing efforts through The Racicot Leadership Award, and The Hope Award.

In 2009, the Leadership Foundation Board of Directors created the Racicot Award to be named for Theresa Racicot, first lady emerita of Montana for her efforts to turn the Leadership Initiative into the Leadership Foundation in 2006-7. The Award would be given annually to a sitting First Spouse who had made significant accomplishments in his/her state on underage drinking prevention and contributed time and energy into the Leadership Foundation's work. Recipients of the Racicot Award have been First Lady Mikey Hoeven who served as co-chair of the Leadership Foundation Board, started the successful "Let's Keep Our Kids Alcohol Free" campaign, raised money for her efforts through Applebee's and a MOMS cookbook, created the "I Choose" CD and served on the Governor's Prevention Advisory Council on Drugs and Alcohol during her tenure as First Spouse; Wyoming First Lady Nancy Freudenthal who worked collaboratively with the Wyoming Liquor Division, the Mental Health & Substance Abuse Division of the Wyoming Department of Health, the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police and parents to develop new partnerships and programs on underage drinking prevention; and First Lady Sally Ganem of Nebraska who worked to create several videos that are still widely used in Nebraska and available to other states that serve as discussion openers.

In 2011, the Leadership Board of Directors voted at their 10th Anniversary Annual Meeting to create a recognition program for Emeritus spouses to be named for Hope Taft, first lady emerita of Ohio and current president of the Foundation. Patterned after the annual Racicot Leadership Award, the Hope Award recipient is selected from nominations of Leadership members and given to a former governor's spouse who has stayed involved and committed to the vision of the Leadership Foundation after leaving the Governor's Residence. Recipients of the Hope Award have been Hope Taft, First Lady Emerita of Ohio who was a leader in underage drinking prevention in Ohio during her tenure as First Spouse, and who has represented the Leadership Foundation at the national level; and Karen Baldacci, First Lady Emerita of Maine who has led the recruiting effort, and stayed on as chair of the Leadership Foundation beyond the normal term.

In 2010, the Leadership Foundation developed a Promise Partnership Program where agencies with a like-minded mission were invited to submit an application for becoming a Leadership partner. Promise Partners include the Hepatitis Foundation; Marin Institute (AlcoholJustice.org); Drug Free Action Alliance; Lee County Coalition For a Drug Free Southwest Florida; NABCA; Dr. Parnell Donahue, author of *Messengers in Denim*; FACE; Prevention Council of Roanoke County; Kansas Family Partnership; Outside the Classroom; The NV Children's Cabinet; 7 Valleys Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Inc.; Center for Prevention and Counseling; Partnership for a Drug Free Community of S. Florida; Coalition for a Healthy Middletown; Operation Snowball, Inc.; Hope Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse; Hope Whispers Community Organization; Southwest Counseling Services; Parent Resource Center at Families in Action/

In closing, the Leadership Foundation, through its strong advocacy by First Spouses, have prompted significant state-level advancements in underage drinking prevention. Many states have passed laws focused on environmental issues such as keg registration, server training, social hosting and graduated licensing. Many members

have worked in their states to bring awareness to the issue, changes in policy and coordination in efforts to prevent childhood drinking. As an example of extensive grassroots activity in underage drinking, more than 2,000 grassroots events were held in 2010 to focus on underage drinking.

The combined national initiatives, state focus, and grassroots activities have contributed to a significant decline in underage drinking in the United States as discussed on page 1-2 of this document. In 1991 when the first Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (YRBS) survey was administered, 50.8% of youth in grades 9-12 reported current alcohol use, or use with 30 days prior to the survey. The latest survey results in 2009 showed that number had dropped to 41.8%, a statistically significant drop with a p-value of 0.00. That statistical difference means that youth in 1991 were more likely than youth in 2009 to be current drinkers. The number of states and territories participating in YRBS survey data collection was fifty-three (53) in 2009; thirty-six (36) were states in which there was a First Spouse member of the Leadership Foundation. When looking at the data from those specific states, all states showed a marked decline in current alcohol with an average decline of 9.4%. Ten out of the 36 showed a statistically significant decline in current youth alcohol users. The front-runners in decline were New Mexico, Rhode Island and North Dakota, and Utah showed the lowest rate of current alcohol use among all states in 1991 and 2009 (26.6 to 18.2).

Despite significant headway in the prevention of underage drinking, current levels are still too high. Researchers continue to document the importance of protecting the development of the adolescent brain from the toxic effect of alcohol. Adolescent alcohol use contributes to a host of social, emotional, legal, academic, and physical consequences. Children who begin using alcohol before age 15 are more likely to develop a full-blown addiction and a lifetime of lost productivity from it. The country's attention to it must be continued and expanded.

Therefore, the Leadership Foundation has launched a 2012 initiative to create "virtual statewide coalitions" with support from NABCA (National Alcohol Beverage Control Board Association). The website, with the First Spouse as the convener, provides a place for all the coalitions in a state to register along with vital, relevant state departments, and agencies as well as relevant alcohol reduction and youth serving agencies. The purpose of this initiative is to facilitate more effective conversations between state and local efforts to prevent underage drinking, and to distribute timely alerts from national agencies to state and local groups.

Mr. President, I hereby offer these aforementioned accomplishments of The Leadership To Keep Children Alcohol Free Foundation, and in so doing, seek to commemorate for posterity their important work and highlight the value of protecting our nation's children from the dangers of underage drinking.●

TRIBUTE TO LOUIE A. WRIGHT

● Mrs. MCCASKILL Mr. President, today I wish to honor the work of Louie A. Wright. In our great Nation, there are labor leaders and then there are exceptional labor leaders. Louie Wright is one of those exceptional labor leaders.

Louie recently retired as the head of the International Association of Firefighters Local 42 in Kansas City, but

Louie will never stop working and fighting for working men and women of Missouri and, for that matter, the Nation.

Louie is exceptional for many reasons, not the least of which are his intellect, his professionalism, and his ability to work with, not against, management to the benefit of his membership.

I have known Louie for over 30 years. I have watched him under pressure. I have watched him succeed. I have watched him stumble from time to time. But through it all he remained steadfast and loyal to his friends and willing to do anything for his fellow firefighters.

Louie grew up in Kansas City and, as a young man, became a firefighter for the city of Kansas City, MO, Fire Department. It was a full-time job, but for Louie full-time is 24 hours-a-day, so in 1988 he entered law school at the University of Missouri in Kansas City.

He received a law degree and was admitted to the Missouri, Kansas, Colorado and Federal bar. Louie also clerked in the U.S. District Court in the Western District of Missouri, and he accomplished all of this while serving the people of Kansas City as one of their most dedicated firefighters.

Having a labor leader with a law degree is a powerful force when negotiating labor contracts, and the men and women of the city's fire department recognized that, electing Louie president of IAFF Local 42 in 1995.

What also set Louie apart was his understanding that for firefighters to expect decent wages and benefits, the department had to demand that it become a first-rate firefighting and fire prevention force. And today Kansas City has one of the best and most well-respected fire departments in the Nation.

Louie did not just care about his firefighters, but he cared for all the working men and women of Kansas City and was and remains a member of the executive committee of the Greater Kansas City AFL-CIO. In addition, one of his true passions is health care and its delivery to all Kansas Citizens. Louie spent untold volunteer hours on the board of the Truman Medical Center and the Mid-America Health Coalition.

In conclusion, we honor him today as an exceptional labor leader. Upon Louie's retirement, IAFF Local 42 lost an amazing president. However, Kansas City has not lost one of its finest advocates for the working men and women. Thankfully, his work will continue. I treasure his friendship and am proud to recognize his immense contributions.●

RURAL HEALTH EDUCATION NETWORK

● Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 20th anniversary of a successful program in my home State of Nebraska called the Rural Health Education Network, or RHEN which focuses on increasing the health workforce.

The RHEN program was established at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, UNMC, as an effort to develop a network of volunteer faculty in communities across the State who would serve as mentors for students entering into various health care professions to perform rural rotations as part of their training. This partnership between UNMC and these Nebraska communities provides hands-on training for these health profession students.

Working with volunteer faculty across rural Nebraska communities, almost all UNMC students are able to complete a rural rotation during their education. Students spend up to 2 months living and working in a rural community under the guidance of a local health professional. In 2010, more than 530 students from UNMC participated in 854 rural rotations in 74 Nebraska communities. The program allows these UNMC students to experience the good life in Nebraska communities, inspiring many students to launch a health career in a smaller community.

The RHEN program has since expanded to promote career opportunities in health care to students in rural areas and smaller communities. In fact, RHEN has become the umbrella under which most of UNMC's rural outreach education activities are accomplished.

One goal of RHEN has been to create innovative programs at the undergraduate level and establish a career pipeline for students from rural areas to become health care professionals in rural Nebraska. A key component in attaining this goal was the establishment of the Rural Health Opportunities Program, or RHOP.

Built on the logic that persons raised in rural areas are more likely to return to rural areas after school, RHOP gives youth from rural areas a head start in pursuing a health care career. Under RHOP, qualified high school graduates receive tentative acceptance into one of nine UNMC health profession programs when they begin undergraduate studies at either Chadron State or Wayne State College in Nebraska. The undergraduate tuition is waived for these students, provided they meet all applicable academic standards.

The RHOP program provides students a career path to nearly every health care field, including medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, dental hygiene, physical therapy, physician assistant, radiography, and clinical laboratory science. Since its inception,

Seventy-five percent of all practicing UNMC RHOP graduates have worked in a rural community for at least part of their careers;

Currently, 183 out of 359 practicing RHOP graduates are health care providers in rural Nebraska;

Two hundred fifty-three RHOP alumni are practicing in 57 Nebraska counties; and

Seventy percent of RHOP graduates stay in Nebraska.