

work in the Senate over the years. We will miss him.

Ever since he arrived here in the Senate JOE has always seen our deliberations as not so much a matter of party so much as it has been about each issue taken individually. That is why we see him as such a thoughtful legislator. He examines every matter that comes before the Senate, taking stock of how it will impact his home State of Connecticut and the future of our Nation, and then he makes a decision on the best course of action for the Congress to take. His ability to sort through each issue focused more on policy than politics has helped him to work with Senators on both sides of the aisle—and bring something important to each discussion. That is why the people of Connecticut kept hiring him back on for another term. Simply put, they saw him in action in the Senate and visited with him when he would return to Connecticut and they liked what they saw.

I got to know JOE as we worked together during a trip to South Korea. The Kyoto Conference had concluded and South Korea was in the midst of a series of problems. The outlook was troublesome and action needed to be taken on a priority basis. The problems were magnified by the election that was going on and the monetary crisis that was being played out in the midst of all of that political campaigning and posturing.

In an effort to be of assistance, the International Monetary Fund had stepped in and was willing to provide the support that was needed in exchange for South Korea's willingness to take certain steps that they believed were essential if any additional elements of the crisis were to be avoided.

The International Monetary Fund asked us to meet with the candidates who were running in South Korea and make them aware of the importance of the current problem and the need to work with the International Monetary Fund toward the solution that had been proposed. It was not going to be enough for them to privately state that they were open to the idea. We needed them to go public with their support for the proposal so that all the candidates would be on the record as being on board with the plan. That would help to strengthen and stabilize the economy and put South Korea on a track toward a long term solution to their financial problems.

We were so "effective" with our assignment that, after meeting with us, each of the candidates took to the airwaves the next day to make it clear that if they were elected they would rewrite the whole deal.

As soon as they made it clear they were not interested in the proposal that had been made, the value of their currency began to sink like a rock. It hit the maximum loss for three days. That was enough to teach each candidate that they had no alternative but to move in the direction the International Monetary Fund had recommended.

As soon as that realization became clear, each of the candidates went back on the airwaves and said that they would comply with the International Monetary Fund's recommendations and pursue the policies that would place the nation on firmer ground. When there is only one viable alternative it makes taking a position on an issue like this a lot easier.

I learned a great deal about JOE on that trip—and from him, too. It was in every sense time well spent both for me and JOE—and for the government of South Korea as well. That experience has been with me ever since and I have never forgotten it.

JOE is completing his fourth term and through it all he has been a good representative of the people of Connecticut. He has been a part of many difficult and complex issues during those four terms. Each day, strengthened by his faith and guided by his strong sense of values and principles, he has taken on each challenge that has come before us and done some very important work for the Nation.

Thanks, JOE, for your willingness to serve. You have compiled a record during your years of service on the State and national level of which you can be very proud. As I thank you for your service, I also want to thank you for your friendship. I have enjoyed having the chance to come to know you and I hope you will continue to keep in touch with us in the months to come.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL EPA MERIT AWARDS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the 11 individuals and organizations from Connecticut that have been awarded 2012 Environmental Merit Awards by the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA. Every year, the EPA recognizes stand-out efforts in different regions of the country, including Connecticut's New England Region. Although not official EPA initiatives, these accomplishments are integral to national environmental stewardship and conservation efforts.

This year, a 2012 Lifetime Achievement Environmental Merit Award was given to Alan Buzzetti, for his career-long efforts fighting against lead poisoning, and Northeast Recycling Council, Inc., for its innovative recycling campaign. Mr. Buzzetti has been instrumental in the creation of a statewide program to eliminate lead poisoning. He also founded the Connecticut Department of Public Health's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Control Program, making Connecticut a clear choice for the regional headquarters of the New England Lead Coordinating Committee. For the past 25 years, the Northeast Recycling Council has worked with Connecticut and 9 other member States to support and promote recycling and sustainability models at both the State and local level and for both public and private efforts.

The EPA also awarded Individual Environmental Merit Awards to three trailblazing activists, who care deeply about our environmental future. Dr. Anthony Leiserowitz is currently a professor at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies where he founded and directs the Yale Center for Environmental Communication. Through these and additional platforms like the Yale Forum on Climate Change and the Media, Dr. Leiserowitz works with journalists and broadcast media to make climate change data relevant to the public.

Kevin Taylor of Waterbury and Betsey Wingfield of Hartford have also received Individual Environmental Merit Awards from the EPA. Mr. Taylor, the Senior Project Manager of Waterbury Development Corporation, has led the redevelopment of more than 20 brownfields into valuable, beloved community properties. Ms. Wingfield—outside of her position at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection—has led a community group to successfully lobby for stream flow standards and regulations in Connecticut. These measures ensure protections for decades and future generations.

To recognize innovative partnerships that cross sectors, the EPA awarded three Environmental, Community, Academia and Nonprofit Environmental Merit Awards. This year's Connecticut winners are Goodwin College, the Long Island Sound Study's Citizens Advisory Committee, and the University of Connecticut's Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials Program's New England Rain Garden Training Team. These three organizations are models of environmental stewardship—linking economic development, equal opportunity, and community participation with responsible conservation. Since 2005, Goodwin College's campus along the Connecticut River in East Hartford has inspired environmental participation from a diverse group of residents. It offers a college degree in environmental studies and has developed Connecticut River Academy, a magnet high school. These two academic institutions have become a hub for local businesses and have created countless jobs.

Similarly, the Long Island Sound Study and New England Rain Garden Training Team have been successful in bringing diverse people together to protect the environment. Curt Johnson and Nancy Seligson, co-chairs of the Long Island Sound Study's Citizens Advisory Committee, have led a large group of citizens, concerned about the future of the cherished Long Island Sound, in developing what the EPA has aptly called a "community blueprint" or "citizens' action plan." The New England Rain Garden Training Team has similarly been on the ground, working with all levels of government and community groups to build rain gardens in New England. By raising awareness of the importance of rain

gardens in reducing pollution from stormwater runoff, members of the Rutgers University Cooperative Extension Water Resources program and University of Connecticut's Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials Program have collaborated on easily translatable training programs for residents and neighborhoods, including underserved communities.

To highlight the important work of State and local governments in environmental regulation, the EPA awarded a 2012 Governmental Environmental Merit Award to Connecticut's Department of Public Health's Drinking Water Section, charged with regulating and administering Connecticut's water system. These hardworking public employees are heroes in times of crisis. In the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, this team offered assistance to nearly 770,000 constituents who had lost power and issued boil water guidance for 16,000 residents.

Lastly, Ethan Allen Operations, Inc., headquartered in Danbury, CT, and the Greenwich Hospital were awarded in the Business, Industry, Trade, or Professional category in recognition of their industry leadership. Ethan Allen has been on the forefront of reducing air pollutant emissions, eco-friendly chemicals, and reduction in waste output. Greenwich Hospital has used innovative, healing rain gardens to promote health as well as manage the area's stormwater runoff, and has assisted other New England area hospitals in instituting this type of sustainable landscaping for their communities.

Congratulations to these remarkable Connecticut ecological vanguards—environmentalists, scientists, and local leaders who have collaborated with others to confront important global issues with tenacity, creativity, and courage. As we have seen, especially recently in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, our Nation's environmentalists are true altruists. I invite my Senate colleagues to applaud these commendable Connecticut companies and individuals, and thank them for their dedication to preserving our landscapes, seascapes, and climate for future generations.

#### REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS OF SANDY HOOK ELEMENTARY

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, although the Newtown community is very much still in mourning, I stand here today to remember 20 innocent children and 6 remarkable adults. I am hopeful that the memories of loved ones can provide some solace in the face of senseless violence. And I hope that as we continue to share stories, our national community will bind together and hearts can begin to heal.

When President Obama addressed the Nation, he spoke of Sandy Hook Elementary School as a compassionate community: parents holding their children's hands on their way to school, teachers meeting them at the door, principals keeping watch.

I have seen, firsthand, tragedy hit this tight-knit community. Last Friday morning, I went to the Sandy Hook firehouse. I went as a public official, but what I saw was through the eyes of a parent. There were moments of unspeakable grief for parents emerging from the firehouse who realized their children were not coming home. I will live always with these sights and sounds of that day.

I have also seen this remarkable community come together in solidarity. The firefighters and first responders are mostly volunteers. Neighbors are like family members. I have the utmost confidence that this beautiful town will heal through deep-rooted relationships and collective strength.

We must remember that these children were dearly loved by parents and teachers who would give everything for them. And these adult victims modeled selfless love for their students. In this spirit of love, community, and compassion, we remember the 26 fallen today.

Twelve little girls passed away on Friday, and we honor them for bringing bursts of light and laughter and love into the lives of all who knew them:

Charlotte Bacon was an outgoing and persistent red head, a member of a Girl Scout troop led by her mother.

Olivia Engel was a great big sister to her younger brother and family dog and was looking forward to playing an angel in her church's upcoming pageant.

Catherine Hubbard had a passion for animals and greeted each day with a smile.

Jessica Rekos loved horseback riding and learning about orcas.

Josephine Gay had just turned 7 and found joy in riding her bike around the neighborhood.

Madeleine Hsu had just turned 6 in July and was remembered for wearing bright, floral dresses.

Ana Marquez-Greene loved to sing and would leave love notes under her parents' pillow.

Emilie Parker was a mentor to her younger siblings, teaching them how to dance and laugh, and was eager to try new things.

Caroline Previdi was a spunky young gymnast who loved to draw and dance.

Grace McDonnell liked wearing bows in her hair and dreamed of living at the beach and becoming a painter.

Avielle Richman took up archery when she was inspired by a female hero in the Disney movie, *Brave*, and is remembered for her joyful giggles.

Allison Wyatt was an eager, energetic first-grader, who was helpful to her peers and loving to family and friends.

Eight little boys passed away on Friday and will be remembered for their joy of life and boundless energy:

Daniel Barden would ride on his father's shoulders on the way to the school bus every morning and was missing his two front teeth.

Dylan Hockley liked to play tag at the bus stop with his neighbors and dress up like Shrek or Superman.

Jesse Lewis would accompany his dad to work at building sites which he happily explored and was learning how to ride a horse.

James Mattioli had just learned how to ride a bike and was discovering that he liked math.

Jack Pinto was a Giants fan and part of a youth wrestling team.

Noah Pozner was best friends with his twin sister Arielle, and older sister Sophia, and liked figuring out how things worked.

Chase Kowalski loved riding his bike outdoors and playing with his five siblings.

Benjamin Wheeler studied piano with his mother and threw leaves in the air with his friends and his brother Nate.

These children were raised with dance and music, with laughter and hope. The parents of victim Grace McDonnell have kept their house ablaze with Christmas lights, even in the wake of the shooting, perhaps in tribute to their daughter, who they called "the love and light of our family." Krista and Rich Rekos called their daughter Jessica, their "rock."

You can feel the energy of these children in the stories that are being told. Although their lives were cut short, they contributed to the world around them by learning, growing, and loving.

Six beloved Sandy Hook faculty members—selfless heroes of the Newtown community—were also taken last Friday. They dedicated themselves to the children around them.

Dawn Hochsprung, the 47-year-old principal of Sandy Hook Elementary School, instinctually lunged in front of the shooter and she was killed in the line of duty. For the students of Sandy Hook, she was the "Reading Fairy," inspiring what she hoped would be a lifelong appreciation for books. Before coming to Sandy Hook, she worked as a principal in the towns of Bethlehem and Woodbury. She was dedicated to education and to family, crediting her own mother for the care she expressed towards others.

Anne Marie Murphy, 52 years old, worked at Sandy Hook Elementary School as a special education assistant and raised four children of her own. She has been remembered as a positive spirit and source of good energy. She was generous and loving, and died shielding the innocent from harm. In a public statement, the family of Dylan Hockley expressed their gratitude to Ms. Murphy and comfort that their son died in the arms of his beloved teacher.

Mary Sherlach, 56 years old, had served Sandy Hook as their school psychologist since 1994 and was a year away from retiring. She earned her undergraduate degree at SUNY Cortland and master's degree at Southern Connecticut State University. Last Friday, she showed her true spirit of selflessness when she and Principal Hochsprung ran towards the shooter to stop him. Her adult daughters live in New Jersey and Washington, DC.

According to her loved ones, at age 30 Lauren Rousseau had landed her dream