

behind the Embrace Hope event is about stepping up and saying as individuals that we can do more if we do it together.

The Embrace Hope community event in Lawton will offer Oklahomans an opportunity to access a lot of free services and some basic help. There are partners from all over the State of Oklahoma who have donated their time, their services, their finances to help those in need all over Southwest Oklahoma—all in one place, all at one time. If someone needs housing—shelter, information, or a referral, food—there will be folks there who can help them.

There will be agencies there to talk about long-term needs and people needing short-term needs. If someone needs a job, there will be folks there who will show them opportunities for hiring. If someone needs to get their resume together so they can get a job, there will be folks there who can take a picture so they can use it with their resume. In fact, if folks need a suit to wear to an interview, there will be folks there to help them get a suit so they are able to prepare themselves for a job.

There will be health services there. You can schedule an appointment with a local health center, and there will also be ways to get dental services, optometry, pregnancy resources, or even a breast exam, if that is needed.

There will be folks there who can give them a haircut if they need a haircut and haven't been able to get access to that.

There will be folks there who are mental health professionals and counselors so they can interact with folks who may struggle with substance abuse or dealing with the stress of life. There will be folks there who can help them with legal assistance. These are communities coming together; ministries, churches, organizations, and government agencies are all coming to one place at one time to help.

There are a lot of needs in the area. In fact, in Oklahoma, according to DHS statistics just from this last year, we had 78,000-plus households that needed winter heating assistance in our State. More than 378,000 Oklahomans receive food benefits, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. These are Federal resources and Federal programs.

As Members of Congress, we work together to help in whatever way we can to help those in greatest need to be lifted out of poverty and to be able to walk through some of their low points in life. But a government check or a check-in with a Federal entity is no substitute for a neighbor helping a neighbor. When you are at your low point of life, a check is helpful to get you through a hard time, but you need a person; you need a mentor; you need a friend; you need a neighbor.

The Embrace Hope event is all about that. It is neighbors helping each other to be able to walk through this process, but it is also about opportunities for

people who live in Southwest Oklahoma. It is not just to help someone one day, but also to understand that we could do this throughout the course of the year because there are lots of folks who say: I want to be able to help.

They just don't know where to go to be able to help their neighbors. They might help the folks who are around them; they might help people in a small group at their church; they might have family members they help, but they say that they want to be able to do more.

The Embrace Hope event allows volunteers by the hundreds who have signed up to serve their neighbor one day, but it also allows them to take a test drive with a bunch of other ministries and nonprofits in the area and say: What do you do that I can volunteer one day to help people, but maybe I can plug in and help you at other times?

It allows those nonprofits and ministries to reach out to a whole pool of people, who maybe are not involved all the time, to say: If you enjoyed helping your neighbor that day, why don't you come work with us the rest of the year?

It is a way for them to meet each other. Quite frankly, it is a way for us to build a stronger State, a stronger community, and stronger connections with our neighbors so that we don't default by saying "They get help from the government, so that is probably all they need," when we know in our heart it is not. They need help from somebody local. They need a friend, and they need somebody who can look them in the face and say: How can we help? That is Embrace Hope.

There have been hundreds of people who have volunteered already, and as they are preparing for this Saturday, it will probably be a cold and wet day, which is a perfect day to help people in need.

As we get together on this Saturday with all the volunteers and all the folks, there will be one person who will be in the background whom the whole event will circle around, but a lot of folks will not know it. Her name is Brenda Spencer-Ragland. She is the lead event coordinator for Embrace Hope. I can't even imagine how many hundreds of hours she has put in behind the scenes to be able to bring this to reality. Her title is event coordinator, but that title doesn't remotely do justice for the work she has done to bring Embrace Hope to reality.

She is one of those incredible individuals who everyone wishes lived around them, but Southwest Oklahoma actually has her. She has a servant's heart and a servant's attitude. It is who she is, quite frankly, more than just what she does.

Brenda served our Nation as a civilian with the U.S. Army for 32 years before assuming her current role. She was Director of the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Program at Fort Sill in Lawton. Her title was a

fancy way of saying that she took care of military families in whatever way she possibly could, and she did it well. She loved serving those who serve us. On her retirement, she grieved because she loved serving those folks at the post.

Now, after dealing with morale at Fort Sill and after serving also as the Housing Director at Fort Sill, she has found a new way to serve—Embrace Hope. She has built around that same mission. She came to Oklahoma City, and she saw an event called Love OKC, which was similar to this. She brought a whole group of volunteers to come take a look at what was happening in Oklahoma City and the remarkable Love OKC event that has happened for 7 years in a row. She took that vision back to Southwest Oklahoma and created Embrace Hope. Meeting after meeting, donor after donor, long night after long night of organizing—it is about to happen.

Brenda, for all of the folks in Lawton who don't know you, they should because, if they did, they would give you a warm hug and a very grateful thank-you for blessing so many people. Thank you for answering the call to serve your friends and neighbors and stepping up when you saw a need and tirelessly giving back to Southwest Oklahoma and the community that you love. It is an honor to call you a friend and a neighbor. I look forward to serving alongside you this weekend in Embrace Hope, doing whatever you need me to do to help you as we love our neighbors together.

God bless you. I look forward to seeing you there, Brenda. I love getting a chance to be able to brag about what is happening in the great Southwest Oklahoma.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNIZING THE ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE FIRE AND RESCUE SQUAD

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I want to take a moment to recognize the brave and selfless individuals from the St. Michael's College Fire and Rescue Squad, based in Colchester, VT. These young men and women respond to emergencies on a moment's notice to help those in need—all while balancing the demands of their full college course load. St. Michael's College Fire and Rescue helps bring a greater degree of safety to residents in Chittenden County, and we are thankful for their efforts. Today, I would like

to commemorate their 50 years of service.

St. Michael's Fire and Rescue Squad was founded in late 1969, after a local student died while waiting for emergency medical services to arrive. The community recognized that in order to prevent further tragedies of this nature, greater resources must be dedicated to emergency responders. Students rose to this challenge, and with the help of Donald "Pappy" Sutton, the former dean of students, they formed the squad. Despite starting out with only minimal equipment, this remarkable group now serves 385 square miles of Chittenden County, spanning their reach into surrounding towns and along 26 miles of Interstate 89. The territory covered far exceeds what we might expect from a group of college volunteers, but their capacity to serve only goes to show just how dedicated the St. Michael's Fire and Rescue team truly is.

Perhaps one of the most impressive aspects of this team is the fact that they are all between the ages of 18 and 22. The maturity and grace displayed by these young individuals while fulfilling their duties is nothing short of inspiring. These are people who, for some, have just left home for the first time and yet are successfully responding to crisis situations which would tax even the most experienced of us. These responders will sometimes be the first on the scene for a car crash, overdose, fire or medical emergency, and a split-second decision could make the difference between a life saved and a life lost. And we should not forget: these responders are all students managing their college classes in addition to volunteering. Emergencies give no credence to a student's sleep schedule; sometimes these students will get woken up in the late hours of the night or early hours of the morning to put out a fire, despite having class the following morning. Those who receive credit for their volunteer work are on call for 24 hours a week, taking turns sleeping in the designated volunteer bunks.

The work done by the St. Michael's Fire and Rescue team is not always glamorous, but it has kept the community remarkably safer. On average, the squad responds to more than 3,000 calls each year—some just false alarms, others far more severe in nature. But what has remained consistent is the relief that these volunteers have offered to local emergency responders and the peace of mind they have bestowed upon our residents. By offering support to our hard-working first responders, they inevitably ensure that more Vermonters get the help they need in the nick of time. In the process, they have inspired other college campuses around the Nation to form their own volunteer response teams, who can then help their own communities in times of need.

This is the type of bravery and selflessness that we are proud to see exem-

plified in our young citizens, and I am honored to have them recognized today.

#### RECOGNIZING ELMORE MOUNTAIN BREAD

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I want to take a moment to recognize a Vermont gem, Elmore Mountain Bread, a small business founded by a wife and husband team. Blair Marvin is a native Vermonter, who met her husband, Andrew Heyn, in Seattle, where she attended culinary school and worked. Blair brought Andrew to Vermont, where after working in several local restaurants, they took over a small bakery. Their work has been recognized locally, regionally, and nationally, in publications including *Kids VT*, *Yankee Magazine* and over the airwaves on National Public Radio. An article by Amelia Nierenberg in the February 18, 2020, edition of the *New York Times* focuses on Blair and Andrew's development of soft, sliced organic loaves, inspired by Blair's effort to provide healthier bread to their son Phineas's classmates at a local one-room schoolhouse. Small businesses like Elmore Mountain Bread are the cornerstone of our local economies, are fixtures in our communities, and are at the very heart of the American dream. In recognition of Blair and Andrew's efforts, I ask that the article "The Whole-Grain Grail: A Sandwich Bread With Mass Appeal," be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

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

[From the *New York Times*, Feb. 18, 2020]

#### THE WHOLE-GRAIN GRAIL: A SANDWICH BREAD WITH MASS APPEAL

(By Amelia Nierenberg)

ELMORE, VT.—When Blair Marvin started making and selling bread 15 years ago, she promised herself three things: She would never preslice it. She would never bake it in a pan. And she would certainly never sell it in plastic.

But three years ago, as she was helping out in the one-room schoolhouse where her son, Phineas, attended first grade, she realized she had a problem. At lunch, his friends weren't eating sandwiches made from the stone-ground, organic loaves she and her husband baked at Elmore Mountain Bread, and sold in local supermarkets. Sure, the students had Vermont-churned cheese from Vermont-raised cows. But their bread often came from a national bread company, made from white flour or laced with preservatives.

"All of these preconceived notions and standards I set for myself," said Ms. Marvin, 39. "None of it mattered. If Phineas's peers weren't eating our bread, then we were doing something wrong."

So she broke her vow. Using mostly whole-wheat flour, stone-ground in a mill made by New American Stone Mills, a company owned by her husband, Andrew Heyn, she developed a new loaf—soft, sliced and sealed in plastic.

"Everybody should have access to healthy food," she said. "We're trying to make something that is recognizable to the general population. It's a way of getting real bread into people's diets." Ms. Marvin and Mr. Heyn are

part of a collective of about 40 bakers, millers, teachers and wheat-breeders who work with the Bread Lab, a famed research center affiliated with Washington State University that has long focused on developing wheat varieties specific to regions of the country. Since last April, using guidelines established by the lab, the collective has pursued a common goal: making a whole-grain loaf that's familiar-looking and affordable enough to appeal to a mass audience.

The Bread Lab calls it "the approachable loaf," but each bakery in the Bread Lab Collective makes a slightly different version, informed by local tastes and local grains. Elmore Mountain Bread calls its bread the Vermont Redeemer, after a type of local wheat. Zingerman's Bakehouse, in Ann Arbor, Mich., calls its loaf State St. Wheat. King Arthur Flour, an employee-owned company in Norwich, Vt., christened its version Just Bread and published a recipe for home bakers on its website. It sells 350 of the loaves a week and donates others to a food pantry, said Karen Colberg, a chief executive at King Arthur Flour.

Whatever the name, the approachable loaf is made in 20 states, from Kalispell, Mont., to New Haven, Conn., as well as in England, Canada and Australia. For each loaf sold, 10 cents goes back to the Bread Lab to help fund grain research.

The loaf is something of a Trojan horse, a way to sneak healthy ingredients onto the taste buds of a younger generation. Its disguise as a standard-issue sandwich bread might be just the guerrilla tactic needed to get regional whole grains integrated into the developed world's diet.

"If it's crusty, you're not going to get soccer moms saying, 'Hey, we need to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches out of this,'" said Anthony Ambeliotis, a member of the collective who sells a version of the approachable loaf for \$4.50 at Mediterra Bakehouse, his family bakery outside Pittsburgh.

Despite a growing interest in baking bread and declining consumption of white bread, most loaves sold in America are still less than ideal in nutrients and fiber. Even the whole-grain breads that have reached a national market sometimes contain chemical preservatives or additives, like flavor enhancers or sugars.

"Why is it that 'affordable' has to be this hyper-centralized, hyper-processed product?" said Stephen Jones, the director of the Bread Lab, standing in its flour-covered research kitchen in Burlington, Wash., about 70 miles north of Seattle.

Since he founded the lab in 2011, Dr. Jones has tried to reinvent bread by promoting regional grain, breeding wheat varieties that taste good, like heirloom strains, but have a strong yield, like most modern hybrids. At the Grain Gathering conference, an annual meeting he hosts at the lab, enthusiasts and members of the collective come together to discuss how to incorporate the lab's research into craft baking.

"Once, if you said, 'I want to put my bread in a plastic bag and I want it sliced,' people would be like: 'I think you're at the wrong conference,'" said Louie Prager, an owner of Prager Brothers Artisan Breads in San Diego, which sold 4,800 approachable loaves last year, at \$5 apiece. "But now, it's fine to make a bread that works better for more people."

In summer 2018, Dr. Jones laid out his new vision. Like Ms. Marvin, he recognized that the collective needed to pivot and work with, rather than against, an American palate shaped by generations of white-bread sandwiches. To build the base formula for the new bread, he turned to Jeff Yankellow, a baker and the western region sales manager for King Arthur Flour.