EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING BOJANGLES BEING NAMED ONE OF THE TOP TEN FAST-FOOD RESTAURANTS IN THE COUNTRY

HON. RICHARD HUDSON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Bojangles on being named one of the top ten regional fast-food restaurants in the country according to USA Today's Readers' Choice 2023.

Bojangles opened back in 1977 in Charlotte, North Carolina and has since spread nationwide, operating around 800 locations throughout the Midwest, South and up and down the East Coast. However, Bojangles has remained true to its Carolina roots and is a regional staple, specializing in perfectly seasoned fried chicken, biscuits and, of course, all the fixings.

I have been a big fan of Bojangles since I was a boy growing up in North Carolina. To this day, one of my favorite parts about going home after a long stint in Washington is being able to sit down and enjoy Bojangles with my family, friends, or staff.

Bojangles is a cultural icon and an esteemed member of our community in North Carolina. Its economic and community impact on our state is astounding and I look forward to continuing to work with them to see what they will accomplish in the future.

Mr. Speaker, please join me today in recognizing Bojangles, its leaders, and employees on this momentous occasion and thanking them for all they do for our shared home of North Carolina.

RECOGNIZING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF EASTERSEALS NEW JERSEY

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 75th anniversary of Easterseals New Jersey. Since its establishment on January 8, 1948. Easterseals New Jersey has upheld its mission to enrich the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families.

Easterseals New Jersey remains committed to advancing opportunities for children and adults with developmental disabilities and special needs and empowering them to achieve their goals. Each year Easterseals New Jersey serves over 5,000 people in this endeavor.

Easterseals New Jersey has striven to identify the unmet needs of individuals and their caregivers and provides direct, hands-on support and resources to the community. From its fully accessible camp to its community activities, Easterseals New Jersey provides safe environments for socialization and recreation. Additionally, its employment services, vocational assessments, and residences, among many other programs, help individuals develop life skills and reach their goals.

In its 75th year, Brian Fitzgerald serves as President and CEO of Easterseals New Jersey and is supported by a dedicated and hard-working group of staff, volunteers, and a Board of Directors. Together, the organization shares a commitment and passion for helping people with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, once again, it is my honor to recognize Easterseals New Jersey on its 75th anniversary. Their work to enhance the quality of life of those with disabilities is truly deserving of this body's recognition.

CELEBRATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN UNION, SOUTH CAROLINA

HON. RALPH NORMAN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Mr. NORMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the rich history and 150th anniversary of Grace United Methodist Church in Union County—a testament to the enduring spirit of the faith and community among all its members.

Early Methodism found its roots in Union County thanks to the tireless efforts of the renowned Methodist missionary, Francis Asbury, who visited Union County between 1788 and 1802.

By 1826, a ''new'' Methodist church had already been established on North Enterprise Street. Regrettably, it was eventually demolished in 1893 to make way for the Union Cotton Mill facilities.

In 1871, the dream of constructing a stone church was realized, largely due to the generous donation of granite by Benjamin Dudley Culp. The church was fittingly renamed ''Grace'' in honor of this contribution.

Colonel John L. Young, a dedicated church member, businessman, and builder of the Union and Spartanburg Railroad, oversaw the construction. By 1873, the church had taken its current form.

In 1919, further expansion and renovation work transformed Grace United Methodist Church into its present appearance. The center tower on the front was removed, and the belfry tower was raised and given a lower roof. On the right side of the sanctuary, a new section of pews was added, complete with a full basement and rooms on the main floor for a parlor, choir room, and Sunday school classes.

The architectural integration of these changes was so skillful that the addition became virtually seamless. A significant milestone was achieved in 1968 when a new Casavant organ, boasting twenty-one stops, twenty-eight ranks, and 1,476 pipes, was dedicated to the church.

The stained-glass windows in the church add to its beauty and significance. Four unique windows on the left side of the nave are particularly meaningful. The first window features a crown and cross, symbolizing celestial light. The second window displays an anchor, representing hope and fundamental truth. The third window showcases tablets with the Ten Commandments, a reminder of moral laws. The fourth, known as the Holy Bible window, depicts an open book, symbolizing accessibility to all and honoring the memory of Mary Elizabeth Greer, made by her sister, Cornelia Greer Walker.

As I reflect on the history of Grace United Methodist Church, I want to recognize the profound impact it has had on the spiritual and social fabric of Union County. Grace United Methodist Church stands as a timeless testament to the enduring power of faith, community, and the unwavering dedication of its members. May it continue to inspire and uplift the hearts of those who gather within its hallowed walls for generations to come.

HONORING THE REMARKABLE CAREER OF EMS PIONEER MICHAEL BENENATI

HON. PATRICK RYAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Mr. RYAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Michael Benenati for his long and distinguished career in the field of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in the Hudson Valley.

Michael's career began in 1977 when he certified as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) in New York State. While a full-time student at The Pennsylvania State University, he worked as a crew chief and medical receptionist for the University Ambulance Service, responding to emergencies on campus and in the surrounding community.

In 1987, Michael received his certification as a paramedic in New York State. He has worked part-time in Mobile Life Support and as Emergency Dispatcher for Ulster County ever since.

Michael has served as an important leader in EMS in the Hudson Valley. From 1998 to 2004, Michael worked as the Captain of New Paltz Rescue Squad. Since 2004, he has served as EMS Administrator for the LaGrange Fire District.

Michael has also been a tenacious and effective advocate for needed improvements to EMS in the Hudson Valley and across the country.

As leader of the New York State EMS Council Sustainability Technical Advisory Group, he spearheaded a review of challenges faced by EMS and potential solutions. The group's recommendations were compiled in the NYS 2023 Evidence Based EMS Agenda for the Future, a nationally recognized blueprint for the future of EMS.

Michael has been lauded for his important contributions to the field of EMS. He has been recognized time and again by the State of New York, Ulster County, New York State EMS Council, Hudson Valley Regional EMS Councils, New York State Volunteer Ambulance and Rescue Association, and the EMS Councils of both Ulster and Dutchess Counties, among others.

Most recently, Michael received the Harriet C. Weber EMS Leadership Award from the New York State EMS Council in honor of his decades-long career serving Hudson Valley communities and advocating for fellow EMS workers. Michael is a true public servant who exemplifies the very best of our community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing the accomplishments of Michael Benenati. It is my privilege to rise in recognition of his extraordinary career.

HONORING BISCUITVILLE BEING NAMED THE NUMBER ONE FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT IN THE COUNTRY

HON. RICHARD HUDSON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Biscuitville on being named the number one top regional fast-food restaurant in the country according to USA Today's Readers' Choice 2023.

Biscuitville opened in 1966 in Burlington, North Carolina and has since spread nationwide, operating around 70 locations across the region. However, Biscuitville has remained true to its North Carolina roots and is a regional staple, best known for its famous fresh biscuits and biscuit sandwiches.

I have been a big fan of Biscuitville since I was a young boy in North Carolina. To this day, one of my favorite parts about going home after a long stint in Washington is being able to sit down and enjoy Biscuitville with my family, friends, or staff.

Biscuitville is a cultural icon and an esteemed member of our community in North Carolina. Its economic and community impact on our state is astounding and I look forward to continuing to work with them to see what they will accomplish in the future.

Mr. Speaker, please join me today in recognizing Biscuitville, its leaders, and employees on this momentous occasion and thanking them for all they do for our shared home of North Carolina.

RECOGNIZING SPINA BIFIDA AWARENESS MONTH

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, each October we recognize National Spina Bifida Month and pay tribute to the nearly 166,000 Americans living with Spina Bifida—the most common permanently disabling birth defect compatible with life—and to draw attention to the critical challenges we must address to ensure each and every American can achieve their full potential and attain the quality of life they deserve.

The federal government has an obligation to advance research into devastating diseases and disabilities to help find cures and therapies and to identify preventative strategies. Equally important is federal support for programs and initiatives that help patients and their families as they struggle to live with these conditions, such as Spina Bifida.

Literally translated as ''split spine,'' Spina Bifida is a condition that occurs when a baby's neural tube fails to develop or close properly. Typically occurring within the first 28 days of pregnancy while the neural tube is forming, Spina Bifida often develops before a woman even knows she is pregnant.

Sponsored by the Spina Bifida Association (SBA), National Spina Bifida Awareness Month is a time to highlight the needs of the community and recognize the importance of the work done year-round to advance research, programs, and policies aimed at meeting those needs.

As co-chair of the Congressional Spina Bifida Caucus, I've had the honor to work alongside SBA to advance Spina Bifida awareness, research, and public health efforts in Congress. Founded in 1973, SBA is the Nation's only organization solely dedicated to advocating for and assisting those living with and affected by this debilitating birth defect.

Through its nearly 60 chapters in more than 125 communities, the SBA brings expectant parents together with those who have a child with Spina Bifida. This interaction helps to answer questions and concerns, but most importantly it lends much needed support, solidarity, inspiration, and hope.

Mr. Speaker, Spina Bifida is a birth defect that can happen to anyone. Every day, an average of eight babies are affected by Spina Bifida and approximately 3,000 pregnancies are affected by this birth defect each year.

We do not know the exact cause of this condition, but research has found that if a woman takes 400 mcg of folic acid every day before she becomes pregnant, she reduces her risk of having a baby with Spina Bifida or another neural tube defect by as much as 70 percent.

No two cases of Spina Bifida are ever the same and so this birth defect is commonly referred to as the ''snowflake condition.'' Children born with Spina Bifida typically undergo dozens of surgeries before they reach the age of 18. And during their lifetime, someone with Spina Bifida will face at least $1 million in medical expenses, including multiple surgeries, and most can expect to spend much of their lives in a wheelchair or walking with braces.

Despite these challenges—and thanks to advances in research and medicine, along with policies supportive of children with disabilities—nearly two-thirds of Americans currently living with Spina Bifida have made it to adulthood. And while these strides are certainly worth celebrating, people with Spina Bifida—particularly adults—continue to face a crisis of care that could be largely prevented with the right resources and policies.

For instance, while we have a coordinated system of care designed to treat children with Spina Bifida in the U.S., there is no equivalent for adults. The result is that adults face a ''care cliff'' and enter a very fractured medical system where they are unable to find physicians willing or even knowledgeable enough to provide treatment, as Spina Bifida is still largely taught in medical schools as a pediatric condition and education has failed to keep pace with the rapid rise in the adult Spina Bifida population.

Thousands of adults are left with few options other than to seek care in the emergency room or continue to see their pediatric care team until insurance will no longer cover their care because of their age. And to make matters worse, many of these adults rely on Medicaid as their insurance provider, so even if they have the means to travel to an adult specialist, if they are located in another state—as is often the case—their coverage is denied. Across the country, there are more than 100 pediatric clinics devoted to caring for children with Spina Bifida. There are only 20 whose focus is on adults.

At the federal level, we can and should make dramatic improvements in the ability of adults with Spina Bifida to access quality care by increasing the funding of the CDC's National Spina Bifida Program—the only federal program tasked with improving the care and outcomes for people living with Spina Bifida.

In 2008, the Federal Spina Bifida Program created a National Spina Bifida Patient Registry to collect the scientific data needed to evaluate existing medical services for Spina Bifida patients, and to provide clinicians, researchers, patients, and families, a window into what care models are effective and what treatments are not making a measurable difference.

Building on this in 2014, the Spina Bifida Program funded the development of a Spina Bifida Collaborative Care Network to identify and to disseminate best practices for the care of people with Spina Bifida at all ages.

However, with only $7.5 million in annual funding—and this amount has been stagnant—there are only 11,000 patients in the national registry, limiting the ability of medical professionals to glean knowledge that would advance research in areas critical to improving quality of life. Even modest increases to this funding would make an enormous difference.

Additionally, we should urge NIH to work collaboratively across their many divisions to better understand Spina Bifida. As Spina Bifida can affect every organ and every system in the human body, a collaborative effort undertaken by NIH could result in research that would lead to better care for both this generation and future generations of Spina Bifida patients. Moreover, the new designation of those with disabilities as a health disparity creates a new opportunity to harness federal resources for the Spina Bifida community by ensuring their representation in NIH research and thereby recognizing those with this complex condition in a new and critical light.

We are so fortunate today that our country is benefiting from the talent and contributions of the first generation of adults living with Spina Bifida. Today, I honor and celebrate all of them, along with their care partners, and also remember those we have lost to this condition. And I urge my colleagues to not only increase funding for the National Spina Bifida Program, but to work together so that these Americans receive the care and treatment all of us want for our families and loved ones.