

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 24, 1991

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SALUTE TO BOB DOLE AND
"COMPEER FOR KIDS"
JANUARY 24, 1990
WICHITA, KANSAS

THANK YOU. I AM HONORED TO BE HERE THIS EVENING, AND THANK YOU FOR THIS BEAUTIFUL SCULPTURE. I AM ESPECIALLY PROUD TO RECEIVE A SCULPTURE WHICH WAS COMPLETED BY BABS MELLOR, AN OUTSTANDING KANSAS ARTIST. I READ IN THE WICHITA EAGLE THIS WEEK THAT BABS HAS BEEN UP TO HER ELBOWS IN CLAY RECENTLY, PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON THIS SCULPTURE. AND I CAN SEE WHY SHE'S EARNED SUCH AN OUTSTANDING REGIONAL AND NATIONAL REPUTATION.

THIS AWARD MEANS A GREAT DEAL TO ME, BECAUSE, AS YOU KNOW, PROCEEDS FROM TODAY'S RECEPTION WILL GO DIRECTLY TO THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH CENTRAL KANSAS, AS THEY KICK-OFF THEIR "COMPEER FOR CHILDREN" PROGRAM.

AS YOU ALL KNOW, COMPEER, INC., IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION THAT MATCHES CARING, TRAINED VOLUNTEERS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CLIENTS IN ONE-TO-ONE FRIENDSHIP RELATIONSHIPS.

THERE ARE NOW OVER 100 OPERATIONAL COMPEER PROGRAMS IN 37 STATES. AND THE FASTEST GROWING COMPEER PROGRAM IN THE COUNTRY IS RIGHT HERE IN SEDGWICK COUNTY.

THE CONCEPT OF PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE IS A KANSAS TRADITION. IN HOME TOWN OF RUSSELL, YOU DIDN'T NEED TO ASK FOR HELP, PEOPLE WERE JUST THERE, WILLING TO GIVE. WE CARED FOR EACH OTHER, AND STILL DO. AND THAT CARING HAS MADE EACH OF US A BETTER PERSON.

COMPEER IS APPLYING THAT SAME CONCEPT TO WORKING WITH PERSONS WHO GENUINELY NEED OUR HELP. MANY INDIVIDUALS RECOVERING FROM MENTAL ILLNESS ARE ALONE, TRAPPED IN A WORLD WHERE THEY FIND IT HARD TO TRUST ANYONE.

COMPEER VOLUNTEERS ALLOW THEM TO ESCAPE FROM THAT WORLD. THERE IS SOMEONE TO TALK WITH, SOMEONE THEY CAN TRUST.

ALTHOUGH I'M THE ONE RECEIVING THIS SCULPTURE, IT REALLY HONORS THE DEDICATED AND CARING VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE THE HEART AND SOUL OF COMPEER.

(MORE)

AND THIS YEAR, THOSE VOLUNTEERS AND THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION, ARE EXPANDING COMPEER'S PROGRAMS TO INCLUDE CHILDREN WITH SERIOUS EMOTIONAL OR BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS.

ESTIMATES ARE THAT THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 4,500 CHILDREN BETWEEN AGES 5 AND 18 IN THE SEDGWICK COUNTY AREA IN NEED OF THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OFFERED BY COMPEER.

THE GOAL OF BOTH COMPEER PROGRAMS IS TO ENSURE THAT EACH PERSON RECEIVES THE TREATMENT, TRAINING, AND SUPPORT NECESSARY TO ENABLE THEM TO REACH AS HIGH, AND GO AS FAR, AS THEIR TALENTS WILL TAKE THEM.

THIS WAS ALSO THE GOAL OF LANDMARK LEGISLATION WHICH WAS SIGNED INTO LAW LAST YEAR--THE AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT. I WAS PROUD TO PLAY A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN PASSING THIS LEGISLATION, WHICH WILL ASSIST THOSE AMERICANS WHO MUST CONFRONT PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS ON A DAILY BASIS.

I SUPPORTED ADA FROM THE VERY START, BECAUSE 43 MILLION DISABLED AMERICANS DESERVE TO BE BROUGHT INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF AMERICAN LIFE--TO ENJOY A MEAL AT A RESTAURANT, TO SEE THEIR FAVORITE MOVIE, TO TRAVEL TO A JOB ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION--TO COMMUNICATE BY TELEPHONE, OR TO CHEER AT A BALLGAME.

THE ADA'S UNMISTAKABLE MESSAGE TO AMERICA IS THAT INEQUALITY AND PREJUDICE ARE UNACCEPTABLE.

I ALSO WORKED TO SEE THAT ADA PROVIDED THE NECESSARY SUPPORT TO BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY TO FULFILL THE IMPORTANT JOB OF IMPLEMENTING THE LAW. THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT ADA DOES NOT REQUIRE EMPLOYMENT OF A PERSON IN A JOB FOR WHICH HE OR SHE IS NOT QUALIFIED, CAN NOT DO, OR WHICH POSES A DANGER TO THE HEALTH OF OTHERS.

WHAT WE HAVE SIMPLY SAID IN THE ADA IS THAT EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS MUST BE MADE ABOUT INDIVIDUALS BASED ON THEIR ABILITIES--NOT THEIR DISABILITIES.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT, AS A NATION, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO IGNORE THE TALENTS OF ANY AMERICA. THAT'S THE MESSAGE OF ADA. AND THAT'S THE MESSAGE OF COMPEER. I AM PROUD TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH SUCH AN OUTSTANDING CAUSE, AND THANK YOU, ONCE AGAIN, FOR THIS SCULPTURE.

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