

REG

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR THOMAS H. KEAN
SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM RECOGNITION LUNCHEON
UNION CITY, NEW JERSEY
FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 1985

THANK YOU, VERY MUCH EDWARD (DAVIN)

AND THANK YOU ALL SO VERY MUCH FOR HAVING ME HERE TODAY.
WHEN I RECEIVED YOUR LETTER INVITING ME TO SPEAK WITH YOU THIS
AFTERNOON I WAS DELIGHTED AND JUMPED AT THE CHANCE TO DO SO.
WHY?

BECAUSE I RESPECT SO MUCH THE WORK THAT YOU DO.

THE FIRST THING THAT STRUCK ME WHEN I LEARNED ABOUT THE
SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM WAS THAT I WAS TOUCHED TO SEE PEOPLE --
WHO OFTEN CLAIM TO HAVE LIVED THE BEST PART OF THEIR LIVES,
GOING OUT AND HELPING OTHERS IN LESS FORTUNATE SHAPE THAN THEY.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, THOSE WHO YOU HELP WOULD INDEED HAVE
LIVED THE BEST PART OF THEIR LIVES. TOGETHER, YOU REALIZE THAT
THERE IS A THERE IS A LOT OF GOOD STILL TO COME.

YOUR EFFORTS ILLUSTRATE THAT YOU ARE CARING, DETERMINED INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE TOO MUCH PRIDE TO LISTEN TO THE STEREOTYPED NONSENSE THAT THE ELDERLY DON'T HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY. THAT, SOMEHOW, THEY SHOULD BE ISOLATED IN TODAY'S FAST PACED WORLD.

IT TAKES SOMEONE VERY SPECIAL TO SACRIFICE 20 HOURS A WEEK TO PREVENT THAT ISOLATION FROM HAPPENING. AND IT REQUIRES A TRUE BELIEF IN YOURSELF. THANK GOD YOU HAVE THAT BELIEF.

I'M NOT SURE YOU REALIZE THE FULL BENEFITS OF YOUR EFFORTS. I DON'T MEAN THE PERSONAL BENEFITS FOR YOU AND YOUR COMPANION.

I AM REFERRING TO THE IMPACT YOU HAVE ON THE REST OF US. YOUR WORK MAKES OTHERS GO OUT AND HELP.

FOR INSTANCE, I SHOWED THE SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM PAMPHLET TO A YOUNG INTERN IN MY OFFICE. HE SAID TO ME THAT HE WANTED TO DO THE SAME --- THAT HE WANTED TO GO OUT AND BE A COMPANION TO SOMEONE IN NEED. HE WANTED TO HELP.

TODAY, I'M HAPPY TO SAY HE HAS JOINED A GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS WHO SPEND THEIR SUNDAY MORNINGS WORKING AS NURSES' AIDES AT THEIR LOCAL HOSPITAL.

THERE'S ANOTHER EFFECT. YOU HELP DISPEL THAT STEREOTYPE ABOUT SENIOR CITIZENS. YOU SHOW -- IN YOUR ACTIONS -- THAT A PERSON NEVER, EVER, LOSES THEIR USEFULNESS. YOU SHOW THAT THE SECRET TO SUCCESS AT ANY AGE IS TO KEEP GOING.

YOU KNOW, THERE'S A CHURCH IN CAMDEN THAT I SAW NOT LONG AGO. IT HAS AN INSCRIPTION ABOVE THE DOOR. THAT INSCRIPTION SAYS: "WHAT IS PLEASING TO GOD IS WHAT IS USEFUL TO MAN." YOU -- THE SENIOR COMPANIONS -- ARE THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF THAT QUOTE.

YOU -- AS COMPANIONS -- PROVIDE AN INVALUABLE SERVICE TO SENIORS WHO NEED IT.

WE'VE TRIED TO MAKE A NUMBER OF OTHER SERVICES AVAILABLE THROUGH THE STATE. IN A WAY, WE'VE TRIED TO MAKE THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY ANOTHER KIND OF COMPANION.

IF YOU DON'T MIND, I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD TELL YOU ABOUT A FEW OF THE PROGRAMS THAT THE STATE CURRENTLY RUNS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS. THEY RANGE FROM TAX BENEFITS TO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS TO HOME CARE OPPORTUNITIES. AND THEY ARE DESIGNED TO HELP THOSE OF YOU WHO NEED THEM.

THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THOSE PROGRAMS TO ME IS THE COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED -- IN A WORD -- HOME HEALTH CARE. MADE POSSIBLE BY A WAIVER THAT THE STATE SUCCEEDED IN GETTING FROM MEDICAID, IT OFFERS AN ARRAY OF HOME HEALTH SERVICES.

IT'S PURPOSE IS TO GIVE ALMOST 2,000 SENIORS THE CHANCE TO REMAIN AT HOME -- WITH THEIR FAMILIES, SPOUSES, AND FRIENDS -- RATHER THAN LIVE IN A NURSING HOME.

IT IS HERE THAT YOU BECOME A VITAL PART OF THE PROGRAM. THE PROGRAM ALLOWS THEM TO RETAIN THEIR PRIVACY, THEIR DIGNITY, AND THE SUPPORT OF TREASURED FRIENDS LIKE YOU. IF THEY ARE FORCED INTO A NURSING HOME, THEY OFTEN LOSE ALL THREE.

THAT'S WHY I'M WORKING AS HARD AS I CAN TO CONVINCING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO EXPAND THAT PROGRAM TO COVER MORE PEOPLE. I HOPE YOU'LL JOIN ME. WRITE YOUR CONGRESSMAN. OR SECRETARY HECKLER.

HOME HEALTH CARE IS SO VALUABLE. SO HUMANE. WE MUST HAVE IT.

ANOTHER PROGRAM WE'VE EXPANDED IS THE PHARMACEUTICAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE AGED AND DISABLED, WHICH HELPS YOU PAY FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS. THE PRICE OF NECESSARY DRUGS CAN ALMOST BANKRUPT A SENIOR CITIZEN. THAT'S WHY WE'RE EXPANDING IT TO MAKE SURE THAT INCREASES IN SOCIAL SECURITY WON'T PUSH YOU ABOVE THE ELIGIBILITY LINE.

THE STATE IS NOT JUST INTERESTED IN HELPING SENIOR CITIZENS MERELY GET BY. IT WANTS THEM TO FOLLOW YOUR EXAMPLE -- AND GO OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY. THIS IS WHY WE HAVE THE SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM. IT EMPLOYS 500 SENIOR CITIZENS THROUGH SUBSIDIZED JOBS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, WHILE ON THE JOB, THEY RECEIVE TRAINING FOR NON-SUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT, AND, WHEN READY, MOVE ON TO THAT POSITION.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS OTHER PROGRAMS THAT THE STATE RUNS, BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, I DO NOT HAVE TIME TO DISCUSS THEM ALL.

HOWEVER, THERE IS A PUBLICATION PUT OUT BY THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT'S DIVISION ON AGING THAT LISTS AND DESCRIBES ALL STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS.

THERE IS ALSO A TOLL FREE NUMBER WHICH CAN GIVE YOU INFORMATION OR REFER YOU TO OTHER AGENCIES. THAT NUMBER IS, 1-800-792-8820, IT'S TOLL FREE FOR A PURPOSE -- WE WANT YOU TO USE IT, AND TO USE THE PROGRAMS THAT WE RUN.

BEFORE I LEAVE, I'D LIKE TO SAY A SPECIAL WORD OF THANKS TO ALL THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE WORKED FOR 10 YEARS IN THE PROGRAM.

ALTHOUGH I WILL BE PRESENTING YOU WITH PLAQUES SHORTLY, I WANTED TO LET EVERYONE KNOW THAT WHAT YOU HAVE DONE IS THE KIND OF BRAVE, COMPASSIONATE, AND COMMENDABLE EFFORT THAT MAKES THIS STATE GREAT.

YOU HAVE WARMED MANY HEARTS. TODAY, I HOPE THESE AWARDS WARM YOURS.

YOU ARE AN INSPIRATION TO ALL OF US, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING EACH OF YOU PERSONALLY.

THANK YOU.

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