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REMARKS FOR THE FOSTER GRANDPARENTS JAMBOREE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 1988

-- THANK YOU. I'M VERY HAPPY TO BE HERE. AND BEFORE I DO ANYTHING ELSE, LET ME THANK WALT DISNEY WORLD FOR HOSTING THIS SPECIAL DAY AT EPCOT CENTER AND MAGIC KINGDOM.

-- IT'S GOOD TO BE WITH YOU FOSTER GRANDPARENTS AT THIS JAMBOREE. AND LET ME ALSO SAY HELLO TO THE CHILDREN HERE TODAY. I'M VERY PROUD THAT YOU ARE WORKING WITH YOUR FOSTER GRANDPARENTS IN SAYING NO TO DRUGS.

2

-- CHIEF DAN GEORGE ONCE SAID SOMETHING THAT CAPTURES THE ESSENCE OF THE FOSTER GRANDPARENTS PROGRAM. HE SAID, "IF THE VERY OLD WILL REMEMBER, THE VERY YOUNG WILL LISTEN." AND REALLY, REMEMBERING WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE YOUNG ONCE AND LISTENING TO WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE YOUNG TODAY IS WHAT FOSTER GRANDPARENTS IS ALL ABOUT. AND DO YOU KNOW WHY THESE QUALITIES OF LISTENING AND REMEMBERING ARE SO IMPORTANT? BECAUSE THEY SHOW UNDERSTANDING. THAT IS WHAT SO MANY OF OUR CHILDREN CRAVE -- TO BE UNDERSTOOD.

-- TODAY, I WANT TO TALK BRIEFLY ABOUT SOMETHING THAT MAY NOT BE SO EASY FOR YOU TO UNDERSTAND -- TAKING DRUGS. I KNOW YOU MUST WONDER WHY YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD WANT TO DO THIS TO THEMSELVES. WELL, SOME ARE SEEKING ESCAPE. SOME ARE SEEKING ACCEPTANCE OR A THRILL. AND SOME ARE JUST SEARCHING FOR ANYTHING TO FILL THE VOID INSIDE THEM. IT'S A HORRIFYING REALITY THAT VIRTUALLY EVERY CHILD WILL BE FORCED TO MAKE A DECISION ON WHETHER TO USE DRUGS BY THE AGE OF 12 OR 14. MANY CHILDREN MUST FACE THE DECISION IN

GRADE SCHOOL. SOMETIMES YOUNG PEOPLE MAKE THE WRONG DECISION AND LIFE THEN BECOMES A TERRIBLE STRUGGLE -- OFTEN ONE OF LIFE OR DEATH.

-- THEY BECOME SO CONSUMED BY THE STRUGGLE FOR DRUGS THAT ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE MATTERS. THEIR WORLD IS IN A VIAL OR A PILL OR A PACKET. UNDERSTAND THIS, AND YOU CAN BEGIN TO REALIZE HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO BREAK THROUGH TO THESE YOUNG PEOPLE. THEY HIDE THEIR HEARTS AS CAREFULLY AS THEY HIDE

THEIR STASH OF DRUGS. MY DREAM HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO USE THE FULL, BOUNTIFUL HEARTS OF FOSTER GRANDPARENTS TO REVIVE THE HARD, WITHERED HEARTS OF THOSE BATTLING DRUGS. WE ARE NOW DOING THIS IN VARIOUS PLACES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

-- I'VE COME TODAY TO ASK YOU TO WORK WITH THOSE ON DRUGS WHENEVER THE OPPORTUNITY ARISES BECAUSE THEY NEED YOU DESPERATELY. THIS WILL BE A DIFFICULT UNDERTAKING FOR YOU, BECAUSE DRUG ABUSERS MAY BE SUSPICIOUS, SELFISH, ARROGANT. THEY MAY THINK THEY DON'T

NEED HELP.

-- BUT THEY'RE REALLY CRYING FOR IT, JUST AS MUCH AS YOUR OTHER FOSTER GRANDCHILDREN. THEY NEED TO KNOW THAT SOMEBODY STILL BELIEVES IN THEM EVEN THOUGH THEY DON'T BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES. THEY NEED TO FEEL THEY ARE WORTH KNOWING AND WORTH CARING ABOUT. YOUR CONTINUING PRESENCE CAN TELL THEM THAT.

-- THE AMERICAN POET, JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER, ONCE WROTE SOMETHING THAT TO ME DESCRIBES THE REAL TRAGEDY OF DRUG ABUSE

AMONG OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. HE WROTE, "FOR OF ALL THE SAD WORDS OF TONGUE OR PEN, THE SADDEST ARE THESE: 'IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.'"

-- I BELIEVE THAT YOUR CARING CAN PREVENT SOMEONE FROM ASKING OF A CHILD, "I WONDER WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN?" AND THAT IS WHY EACH OF YOU IS SO SPECIAL. AND WHY EACH OF YOU HAS MY DEEPEST RESPECT AND GRATITUDE.

-- AND NOW, I HAVE A WONDERFUL ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE. MICKEY, WOULD YOU COME UP HERE PLEASE? AS MANY OF YOU MAY KNOW,

MICKEY TURNS 60 YEARS OLD THIS YEAR, MAKING HIM ELIGIBLE TO BE A FOSTER GRANDPARENT. HE REPRESENTS EVERYTHING A FOSTER GRANDPARENT SHOULD REPRESENT -- A LOVE OF CHILDREN, A KIND HEART, AND THE EXPERIENCE OF AGE. AND SO MICKEY, I'M PROUD TO PRESENT YOU WITH THIS CERTIFICATE THAT MAKES YOU AN OFFICIAL FOSTER GRANDPARENT.

-- MY CONGRATULATIONS TO MICKEY, MY CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF YOU FOSTER GRANDPARENTS. AND NOW, LET'S GO HAVE SOME FUN.

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