his impressive achievements with my colleagues.●

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA, DAKOTAS CELEBRATES 80 YEARS

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, it is with great honor that I rise today to congratulate the Volunteers of America, Dakotas in South Dakota, which celebrated its 80th anniversary celebration in August, 2003.

Volunteers of America, Dakotas is one of over forty affiliates making up a national network of nonprofit, spiritually based organizations providing local human service programs and creating opportunities for individual and community involvement. Nationally, Volunteers of America employs more than 11,000 people and each year more than 1.5 million people feel the helping hand of this organization.

Began in the early 1920s, Volunteers of America, Sioux Falls was started as a prison ministry by Frank and Emma Tremont. However, the concerns of the couple were expanded when, during World War I, men went to war and women went to work, and childcare became a pressing need. In response, the organization opened a childcare center and soup kitchen. Over the years, the soup kitchen and prison ministry faded away, but quality childcare remained a service priority. It was the recent merger of this organization with another group, Turning Point, that formed Volunteers of America, Dakotas. Started as Project Threshold on September 16, 1972, Turning Point's original vision was a home for delinquent and runaway girls. Over its next 20 years, Project Threshold became a widely recognized leader in adolescent issues, treatment, and prevention services, Together, these two associations are now assisting more than 290 children each day.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge all of the Volunteers of America-Dakotas Centers in South Dakota, including the Bollinger Center, Joe Foss School, Whittier Middle School, Thrift Store, and other Centers in Sioux Falls, SD; the Native Hope Center in Sisseton, SD; and the Volunteers of Americas, Dakotas Center in Aberdeen, SD. Headquartered in Sioux Falls, Volunteers of America, Dakotas serves over 12,000 individuals of all ages each year. Their mission, which is to assist people of all ages in stepping toward a brighter future, is one that all South Dakotans should strive to live by.

I am proud to have this opportunity to honor the Volunteers of America–Dakotas for its 80 years of outstanding service. People of all ages need to think more about how we, as individual citizens, can work together at the local level to ensure the health and vitality of our towns and neighborhoods. I strongly commend the hard work and dedication of these Centers, and I am very pleased that their efforts are being publicly honored and celebrated. It is with great honor that I share their impressive accomplishments with my colleagues.●

IN TRIBUTE TO JOHN McKISSICK'S 500TH FOOTBALL WIN

● Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, on Friday night, John McKissick, of Summerville, SC, won his 500th victory as the head coach of the Summerville Green Wave high school football team, and this Senator rises to congratulate this towering giant of coaches.

I want to put this in perspective. That is almost 100 more victories than Eddie Robinson, the winningest coach ever in college football, had at Grambling and Leland. That is 170 more victories than Don Shula, the winningest coach ever in the NFL had with the Miami Dolphins and Baltimore Colts. This is a record that not Bear Bryant, not Woody Hayes, not Tom Landry, not Vince Lombardi, not any coach—pro, college, or high school has ever come close to ever seeing.

He started coaching in 1952, 2 years before Strom Thurmond entered the Senate, 14 years before I came, and now he'll outlast us both. In 5 decades at Summerville High School, he has 10 State championships and 26 regional titles under his belt; and many of the 3,000 teenagers he has coached went on to win scholarships at colleges across the country. In this time, he has had only two losing seasons, and he has never missed a game. Most of all, he has kept his priorities straight: education first, football second.

In my part of the country, John McKissick is a legend. I know all my football-fanatic colleagues join me in saying to John: you're a national legend, too. You have done more for the sport of high school football than any person in the country.●

HONORING LAIRD LARSON

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to publicly commend Laird Larson, a farmer near Clark, SD, on his selection as one of South Dakota State University's Eminent Farmers for 2003.

The Eminent Farmer and Homemaker Program, which has honored nominees since 1927, seeks farmers who have not only made significant contributions to their community, State and Nation, but have also given unselfishly of their talent, time and leadership to public programs, educational institutions, and church.

Laird has earned the respect and admiration of all those who have had the opportunity to work with him. His love for South Dakota and passion for agriculture set him apart from other outstanding farmers in the state. Laird's friendly demeanor and wealth of knowledge have helped him develop close relationships in various agriculture groups, including the South Dakota Crop Improvement Association, Northeast Research Farm Advisory Board, and South Dakota FFE Foundation Board. Laird has also worked to raise funds for renovation South Dakota State University greenhouses and is currently working to develop a seed science center at South Dakota State University.

Americans are the envy of the world because we enjoy the most affordable and the safest food, spending only 10 percent of our household income on groceries. Agricultural producers in the United States must cope with the unpredictability of the weather, markets, and government policy, yet time and time again they are the most productive and efficient in the entire world. Farming and ranching families provide immeasurable contributions to quality of life, economic development, and the culture of rural America. Farmers and ranchers are the backbone of South Dakota's economy and should be commended for what they do.

This prestigious honor is a reflection of Laird's extraordinary success as a farmer, as well as his commitment to conservation, and contributions to the community. I am pleased that his agricultural leadership is being publicly recognized, and that his achievements will serve as a model for outstanding agricultural producers throughout the State to emulate. It is with great honor that I share his impressive achievements with my colleagues.●

TRIBUTE TO JAMES D. BENNETT, JR.

● Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to James D. Bennett, Jr., an outstanding public servant who is retiring after a distinguished career spanning more than 34 years as a firefighter in the capital city of Providence, RI.

James Bennett began his career as a Providence firefighter in August of 1968, quickly rising through the ranks becoming lieutenant in December of 1977, captain in February of 1984, and ultimately he was promoted to the coveted rank of battalion chief in April of 1986.

Chief Bennett's illustrious career has been marked with a special dedication to his brethren firefighters, and to seeking out leadership opportunities and specialized training for himself and the department. He completed numerous Federal, State, municipal and professional association training programs, courses and workshops on fire and safety issues. A member of the Fire Department Safety Officers Association and International Association of Fire Chiefs, he served from 1977 to 1982 as president Providence Local 99 of the International Brotherhood of Firefighters.

As a community and as a Nation, it is most fitting that we pause to reflect upon the contribution of those in our society from whom we ask so much. With selflessness, dedication and great personal sacrifice firefighters answer the call each and every day, putting themselves in harm's way to protect