

I have no money for essentials like good toilet paper and soap. How does somebody find a job?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to raise these voices. These are real Americans. They are real stories.

Some of the questions we face in this Congress are complicated. This one is simple. Take up H.R. 4415, and we can take away the pain that so many Americans—almost 3 million Americans—are facing.

#### HONORING THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF JONI EARECKSON TADA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. HARPER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary life of Joni Eareckson Tada.

When Joni was 17 years old, she was just like any other high school graduate. She was thrilled to be on the brink of college, and she was excited to spend a summer swimming in the nearby Chesapeake Bay.

With high school behind her, she was ready to really begin her life. She was not prepared, however, to have her fourth cervical vertebrae crushed in a terrible accident, an accident which would render her a paralyzed quadriplegic and shatter her mobility and independence forever.

Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened. On July 30, 1967, while diving with her sister, Joni misjudged the depth of the water and snapped her neck at the bottom of the water. She lost all movement in her hands and legs and was rushed, motionless, to the hospital.

Joni spent many grueling months there and often thought about killing herself. She thought her life was not worth living, and she didn't want to be a burden on her loved ones.

"There were many nights I would wrench my head back and forth on the pillow, hoping to break my neck up at a higher level. I wanted to die," Joni later said.

There were times she even asked her friends to help her commit suicide. She was desperate to end her life; but despite her intense depression, despite her intense physical suffering, it was during this time that Joni turned to her Christian faith and began to search for new purpose in her tragedy.

She studied her Bible, leaned on her friends and family, and prayed for guidance, until she realized, almost overnight, that while she would never be able to walk again, she could choose to live through her disability. The Lord could use her to inspire and encourage others.

So she resolved, "One night, lying there in the hospital, I said, 'God, if I can't die, please show me how to live.'"

I am glad to say, Mr. Speaker, that she has lived well, is one of the most inspirational figures I know, and has touched so many lives with her incred-

ible story. Let me briefly outline some of her many accomplishments and undertakings.

During a 2-year rehabilitation period after she left the hospital, Joni learned how to hold a paintbrush using her teeth. She labored away at this skill and often struggled, until she mastered the technique. Today, her artwork is prized around the world and is just one of the many ways she has provided inspiration.

In 1979, she founded Joni and Friends, a Christian ministry dedicated to serving the disabled community around the world. It partners with local churches to provide resources and support for thousands of families afflicted by disabilities. In fact, her organization has served families in 47 countries and, in 2006, opened a new facility in the United States.

Just a few weeks ago, I had the pleasure to meet and talk with Joni about her ministry and was privileged to introduce her before she spoke at Belhaven University in Jackson, Mississippi.

□ 1030

The ministry does such incredible work. And let me tell you, I don't think she has any plans of slowing down.

In addition to all this, she has somehow found time to publish over 50 books, many of which are critically acclaimed and rank on bestseller lists. Her radio show, "Joni and Friends," is broadcast in over 1,000 outlets and, in 2002, won the Radio Program of the Year award from the National Religious Broadcasters Association.

Joni has even helped us get things done here in Washington. She has represented the disabled on numerous government committees and was instrumental in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. And she continues to help.

As for awards, her list is very long. She is the recipient of the Victory Award from the National Rehabilitation Hospital, the Golden Word Award from the International Bible Society, and the Courage Award from the Courage Rehabilitation Center. She is a member of the Christian Booksellers Association's Hall of Honor and is a recipient of the William Wilberforce Award.

Joni holds honorary degrees from Westminster Theological Seminary, Biola University, Indiana Wesleyan University, Columbia International University, Lancaster Bible College, Gordon College, and Western Maryland College.

As I said, she is quite the achiever. And how does she really do it? Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think something that C.S. Lewis once said helps to answer that. He said:

If you read history, you will find that the people who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since people have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this world.

I think Joni understands this. Her mind is truly set on another place. Her life has been extraordinary.

So, again, on behalf of the House of Representatives, I would like to recognize and celebrate the life of Joni Eareckson Tada, a courageous woman who truly knows how to live.

#### THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. BONAMICI) for 5 minutes.

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, May is Older Americans Month, and today I rise to call attention to historic legislation that has for decades served as a lifeline to our country's seniors.

The Older Americans Act is responsible for critical services, like housing, nutrition, and employment assistance. For many seniors, the Older Americans Act is responsible for the delivery of their only warm meal of the day and their only social interaction.

The legislation expired in 2011; and today I am speaking in support of H.R. 4122, the bill I introduced with the gentleman from Texas, Congressman RUBÉN HINOJOSA, to reauthorize the Older Americans Act.

Congress first passed the Older Americans Act in 1965 as one of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs. Its goal is to ensure that our seniors age with dignity, maintain independence for as long as possible, and do not grow old in poverty.

Over the years, the OAA has been reauthorized and improved upon to meet the needs of the changing population. As Americans live longer, our policy needs to keep pace.

Our legislation includes stronger elder abuse protections, modernized senior centers, improved transportation services, and other programs that promote seniors' independence.

One of the titles in the Older Americans Act provides important employment support to the country's seniors, something they need now more than ever. The Senior Community Service Employment Program provides job training and job placement for low-income seniors. Many of the people who use this important program were laid off during the recession, only to see their position disappear altogether during the recovery. Now they find that they lack the necessary skills to fill the new jobs that have been created, and they must compete with a younger, inexperienced workforce willing to accept wages lower than their earning potential.

This important program, known as SCSEP, provides specialized training for these mature workers. By partnering with local nonprofits and State agencies, SCSEP helps older Americans develop new skills and then pairs them with employers.

I recently met with several SCSEP participants at the Forest Grove, Oregon, senior center in my district, and I heard firsthand how the program