

and dedication of Wendy Lazor, Councilman Ed Fitzgerald, and the rest of the City of Lakewood's Public and Educational Leadership for their support of the National Walk Our Children to School Day. And let us honor the memory of the young John Lazor, and the courage of his mother, Wendy, for striving to better the community even in the face of personal strife and distress. Her selfless compassion and triumph in the face of tragedy is inspirational to all.

COMMENDING THE AMARILLO
VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH
CARE SYSTEM

HON. LARRY COMBEST

OF TEXAS

HON. MAC THORNBERRY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 3, 2000

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I, along with my distinguished colleague, Mr. THORNBERRY, wish to congratulate the Amarillo Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care System for receiving the Robert W. Carey Quality Award from the Department of Veterans Affairs. This annual award is one of the highest honors that a VA facility can receive. The Carey Award recognizes model organizations for their quality transformation efforts, organizational effectiveness, and improvements in performance service and satisfying customers. The Amarillo VA Health Care System, which provides medical assistance to veterans throughout the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandles and portions of Eastern New Mexico and Southern Kansas, received the 2000 Carey Award for the health care category.

The Amarillo VA Health Care System serves a population of 75,000 veterans and houses an acute care facility, nursing home, two community-based outpatient clinics, and four contractual primary care clinics. Over 25,000 patients are treated annually, including 3,300 inpatient and over 200,000 outpatient visits. They have implemented a wide variety of innovative measures, from moving the Substance Abuse Program to an outpatient setting to restructuring Primary Care and to establishing a safety program to reduce employee accidents. Through the use of employee teams, the hospital now administers a Bar Code Medication Administration, which uses computer technology to track and monitor patient medications. In addition, they have established a pilot program of the Computerized Patient Record System, enabling the hospital to coordinate patient information so that all aspects of the health care system may be utilized.

The mission of the Veterans Health Administration and the Amarillo VA Health Care System is to improve the health of the served population by providing primary, specialty, and extended care, and related social support services through an integrated health care delivery program. As a learning organization, the VA Health Care System continually raises the standard for VA facilities nationwide. By focusing on trust, teamwork, and continuous improvement, the Amarillo VA has been able to greatly reduce the costs of primary care, increase the quality of health care available and

improve employee relations. These combined efforts have built a facility that provides an invaluable service to thousands of veterans.

It is with pride that we recognize the doctors, nurses, administrators, volunteers, and other staff who have contributed to this outstanding accomplishment. Thanks to their tremendous efforts, West Texas is home to an outstanding veteran health care provider. We wholeheartedly extend our congratulations to the Amarillo VA Health Care System for receiving the 2000 Robert W. Carey Quality Award.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ROB PORTMAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 3, 2000

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, because I was unavoidably detained, I missed Roll Call Votes #503, 504 and 505 yesterday.

Had I been present, I would have voted "Yea" on each bill.

HONORING KATARYNA CHOMIK

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 3, 2000

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I am happy today to recognize the accomplishments of a woman who has unselfishly worked to improve the quality of life for our citizens. On Tuesday, October 10, members of Flint, Michigan's International Institute will gather to present to Mrs. Kataryna Chomik its prestigious Golden Door Award, given annually to an immigrant who has made a positive impact on the greater Flint community and the Institute itself.

Born in February of 1920, in the Western Ukraine, Irena, as she has come to be known, grew up with her parents and seven sisters. As a child, Irena promised to never leave her home or family. However, several family tragedies, including the death of her father, prompted Irena's mother to send her away to work as a companion and nursemaid to Maria Lewicka, the daughter of a Ukrainian priest who was recovering from a spinal injury. Although Irena's strong faith had been forged early in her life, this experience strengthened her beliefs and her commitment to service.

At the beginning of World War II, Irena was sent to a school for kindergarten teachers, and upon graduation, managed a village program. The war progressed and headed in the direction of Irena's town. Ukrainian churches were being destroyed and the clergy exterminated, but Irena continued to work to preserve her heritage. As a result, she was sentenced to ten years of hard labor by a Soviet war court, but was later retried and released. After this, Irena fled on foot, finding refuge in a Czechoslovakian convent, where the Sisters bought her a plane ticket to Belgium.

It was in Belgium that Irena met Nicholas Chomik, who would later become her husband. On Christmas Eve 1950, the Chomiks, along with their daughter, Olga, were welcomed to their new life in the United States by a sight that told them that all their struggles

had not been for naught—the Statue of Liberty. After living on the East Coast for a year, the Chomiks moved to Flint, where Nicholas found employment with General Motors, and Irena worked as a seamstress. During this time, the Chomiks were blessed with two more daughters, Mary and Daria.

It was during this time that Irena began a long-standing relationship with the group that greatly helped her when she first came to America, the International Institute. Irena was always on hand volunteering on various committees, and participating in activities such as international dance exhibitions, parades, and her annual Ukrainian Easter Egg workshops.

Mr. Speaker, I am truly fascinated by stories such as Kataryna Chomik's. Through tremendous adversity, she has been able to live the true American dream. She is truly an inspiration to all who come into contact with her. I ask my colleagues in the 106th Congress to please join me to congratulate and wish Irena the very best.

A TRIBUTE TO THE MINORITY
ARTS RESOURCE COUNCIL

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 3, 2000

Mr. BRADY. Mr. Speaker, today I honor the Minority Arts Resource Council as it sponsors the Third Annual African American Rodeo in the First Congressional District. The rodeo focuses on the important contributions of African American Western pioneers. It also offers the opportunity for thousands of inner city school children to view a part of American history that has been left out of history books.

The African American Rodeo is a real life exciting spectacle that spotlights the role African Americans played in the settling and shaping of the American West. It tells the stories of the legendary Black heroes of the old West, including Bill Pickett, who invented the sport of bulldogging or steer wrestling. If he had not been banned from competing with white rodeo contestants, Pickett may well have become one of the greatest rodeo record setters.

Therefore, I proudly support the African American Rodeo and I thank MARC for its efforts to showcase the contribution of the Black cowboy so that our children can learn about an important American story that for too long has gone untold.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GARY G. MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 3, 2000

Mr. GARY MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, September 25, 2000 I was unavoidably detained in my district. During my absence, I missed roll call votes 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, and 492.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on each of the motions.