

MIEASHA HICKS NAMED NATIONAL
YOUTH OF THE YEAR BY BOYS &
GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 17, 2003

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to announce to our colleagues that Mieasha Hicks, 18, a member of Boys & Girls Clubs of Toledo, Ohio, was named National Youth of the Year by Boys & Girls Clubs of America at its annual Congressional Breakfast held today in Washington, D.C. As noted by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America national office, sponsored by the Reader's Digest Foundation, the Youth of the Year program recognizes outstanding contributions to a member's family, school, community and Club, as well as personal challenges and obstacles overcome. She competed against four other regional finalists, Kewanna Daniels (Gulfport, Miss.), Ambrosia Hafen-Hayes (Las Vegas), Yamarie Negron (Mt. Kisco, N.Y.) and Luis Vasquez (Greeley, Colo.).

In their announcement of this award, the Boys and Girls Clubs of America describe Mieasha Hicks, as a survivor. Her parents were 13 and 15 years old when she was born. Periodically, she was shuffled between households as the family grew. Being the oldest of seven children, Mieasha had no choice but to mature quickly.

Today, she helps her brothers and sisters with their homework and prepares them for tests. She often takes them to the library, the movies, shopping and out to dinner. Thanks to Mieasha, all of her younger siblings have become honor students.

Her father died when she was 12 and her mother left the state when she was 11. Despite these traumatic occurrences, Mieasha's visits to the East Toledo Boys & Girls Clubs gave her a reason to stay positive.

For the last 10 years, the Club has given her a place to belong. There she served as vice president of the Keystone Club, a group which gave her the opportunity to lead community service projects. She has also learned marketing and sales skills while organizing bake sales and candy sales as fundraisers. Among other activities, Hicks assists with Power Hour, her Boys & Girls Club's after-school homework help program.

Mieasha Hicks was an academic standout at Central Catholic High School, where she has been a member of the National Honor Society and the school choir, a cheerleader, and student council representative. She is also actively involved with the African-American Culture Club.

She began attending Bowling Green University this fall where she will study medicine and science.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly a pleasure to commemorate this accomplishment by one of the first leaders of tomorrow's generation. For the next year she will have the opportunity to represent the Boys and Girls Clubs of America throughout the nation, and be an inspiration to thousands of young people who will see proof that success is possible when young people are willing to commit themselves to life's important goals. Congratulations, Miesha!

IN HONOR OF THE PIONEER
MOTHER MONUMENT

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 17, 2003

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, on April 23, 2003, in my hometown of Lexington, MO, a dedication was held on the Pioneer Mother Monument, known as the Madonna of the Trail.

In 1928, the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) erected 12 duplicate monuments known as the Madonna of the Trail paying tribute to the pioneer motherhood of the covered wagon days. The monuments were placed along the Old Trails Memorial Highway in twelve states across the United States. Statues are located in Springfield, Ohio; Wheeling, West Virginia; Council Grove, Kansas; Lexington, Missouri; Lamar, Colorado; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Springerville, Arizona; Vandalia, Illinois; Richmond, Indiana; Washington County, Pennsylvania; Upland, California; and Bethesda, Maryland.

At the original dedication of the Pioneer Mother Monument, 75 years ago, my father Ike Skelton III, spoke as a representative from the Lexington Legion Post. Also speaking that day was the Jackson County Court Judge Harry S. Truman.

The rededication of this monument was under the direction of the Missouri DAR. The moving force behind this event was LaVeda Cross, of Lexington, MO, with the help of her devoted husband Bill. However, without the support of the Lafayette/Lexington Chapter DAR and all the local citizens, the day would not have been possible.

I was privileged to deliver the rededication speech which is set forth as follows:

RE-DEDICATION OF THE PIONEER MOTHER
MONUMENT LEXINGTON, MO—AUGUST 23, 2003

Thank you for inviting me to take part in this special ceremony to rededicate the Madonna of the Trail, the Pioneer Mother Monument, here in Lexington. This event could not have taken place but for LaVeda Cross and her devoted husband, Bill. A special thanks to the Lafayette/Lexington Chapter DAR and local citizens for their efforts to make this day possible.

To be able to participate in this event is very special to me, and not just because my wife Susie has been an active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Seventy-five years ago, when this very monument was dedicated, many prominent people participated: Mrs. Benjamin L. Hart, the Missouri DAR's State Regent; Edward J. White, Vice President of the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company; Mrs. John Trigg Moss, Chairman of the DAR's National Old Trail Committee; Mrs. Henry C. Chiles, Regent of the Lafayette Lexington DAR Chapter; and Judge Harry S Truman, President of the National Old Trails Road Association, to name a few.

But according to the program, and according to history passed down in my family, my father, Ike Skelton, III, Lafayette County's young Prosecuting Attorney, was allowed to give remarks while presenting a memorial flag and flag pole at the monument site. He was acting as the representative of the Lexington American Legion Post.

On that day, my father first made the acquaintance of Judge Harry Truman, the "Man From Independence", the man who

would later become President of the United States. Because of the lasting friendship that was formed at the inaugural dedication of this monument, my wife and I in later years came to know President Truman as well—and he was a genuinely nice person.

But imagining that Monday afternoon, September 17, 1928, it's unlikely anyone dreamed that among them stood a future President—a man whose decisions would set the course for the second half of the twentieth century and alter the future of the world. Makes you want to look around a bit at the crowd gathered here today, just in case.

The Pioneer Mother Monument in Lexington has been a landmark in this city for my entire life. As you may know, there are twelve duplicate DAR monuments known as the Madonna of the Trail paying tribute to the pioneer motherhood of the covered wagon days. The monuments have been placed along the Old Trails Memorial Highway in twelve states across the United States.

According to an article in the DAR Magazine written some years ago by Helen Bartlett of the Samuel Huntington Chapter in Huntington, Indiana, the idea of a monument to pioneer mothers came to Mrs. John Trigg Moss of St. Louis after she saw a picture of a statue in Portland, Oregon, dedicated to Sacajawea, the Shoshone Indian woman who guided Lewis and Clark from Fort Mandan, North Dakota, to the mouth of the Columbia River. That Sacajawea was the inspiration of this statue seems quite appropriate.

Lexington sits on the bluffs overlooking the river Lewis and Clark traveled, not quite half-way through their trek across the unknown continent. And like the pioneer mothers who followed, Sacajawea also knew what it was like to care for an infant while leading a party of travelers through the wilderness.

In this world of 24-hour news channels, satellite dishes, thousands of newspapers, magazines, and internet sites, it is difficult to overstate the leap of faith it must have taken for the pioneers who bravely ventured into largely uncharted territory as participants in the Westward Movement. In many respects, it was a jump into the great unknown. And in some cases, what the pioneers thought was true—from pamphlets, from books, from word of mouth—was far from it.

A verse that pays tribute to the covered wagon people goes like this:

The coward never started;
The weak died on the way;
Only the strong came through.

The women and men who pioneered the West built this country, but the role played by the women who built this country deserves special attention and recognition. This statue, symbolizing all of the women who settled the West, is larger than life—just as the women we celebrate led lives that were larger than life.

With a baby in her arms and another child at her side, the Madonna of the Trail glorifies the value of family. We can see her sturdy boots, visible as she strides Westward, but we also see that the Pioneer Mother carries a rifle. Looking at her, there is no reason to doubt that she would be able to use it.

The women who endured the trip West were tough, sturdy and strong. They traveled the mountains, the hills, and the plains, crossed rivers, fought heat and cold, wind and rain. They cared for their husbands, bore children, and protected their families. They tended their animals, hunted and prepared their food, repaired their wagons, camped under the stars, and staked out homesteads.

While men and women together built new communities in a new, strange land, it was