

H-S-T Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in their communities. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

#### ALBIA COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Albia Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Albia Community School District received four Harkin fire safety grants totaling \$435,000 to make improvements throughout the school district. The district was able to make repairs to the ceiling and walls in the practice gymnasium at the high school, replace windows at Kendall Elementary School, upgrade electrical systems in several buildings and make other safety improvements throughout the district. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Albia Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Robin Haselhuhn, vice-president Dr. John Scieszinski, Mary Wynn, Jeff Liston, Mike Stocker, Donna Whisler and Denny Amoss and former board members Kim Sawatzky, Bob Beary, Darrell Radeuchel, Bob Fluegge and Mick Brock. I would also like to recognize superintendent Kevin Crall, former superintendent Dave Sextro, high school principal Linda

Hoskins, elementary school principal Nancy Foust, board secretary Nancy Foust and buildings and grounds supervisor Sam Kirby.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Albia Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

#### CENTRAL LYON COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Central Lyon Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair—efforts everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Central Lyon Community School District received a 2002 Harkin grant totaling \$623,711 which it used to help make improvements including disability access and to build a community room and fitness center. This facility is used not only to promote

wellness, but as a morning alternative school for the local community. The district also received three fire safety grants totaling \$31,765 which it used to install emergency lighting and stairs and to update smoke and heat detectors and alarms in the elementary school. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Central Lyon Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Steve Sieperda, Dr. Chet DeJong, Pat McCarty, Judy Gacke and Gail Van Berkum and former board members president Bruce Vogel, Marilyn Mammenga and Tom Wall. I would also like to recognize superintendent David Ackerman, former superintendent Bill Hutchinson, business manager Jackie Wells and former board business manager Robin Kilgore.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

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#### COLLEGE COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the College Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.