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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 Center Point-Urbana 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.●

CORNING COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Madam 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 Corning 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 Corning Community School District received several Harkin fire safety grants totaling \$193,244 which have been vital to the district's ability to maintain and keep buildings open. The high school was built in 1928 and had been cited by the State Fire Marshall for severe deficiencies. As a result of this funding, Corning Community School District was able to install an automatic door, a state of the art fire detection system, replace all the doors in the high school with automatic closures, and they are beginning the process of adding an elevator for students and others who use wheelchairs. 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 superintendent Mike Wells, the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Corning Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Gary Goldsmith, Ralph Morales, Lori Harvey, Dr. Anna Leonard, and Shelly Barton and former members Nancy Turner, Pastor Andy Rubenking, and Reldon Ramsey, along with former superintendent, Gregg Fuerstenau. Gary Goldsmith insisted that the necessary improvements be made and that the school provide a safe learning environment for all children.

In addition, I applaud the efforts of Gary Swartz with the Iowa Department of Education who provided guidance with the grant writing procedure and high school principal Kent Jorgensen who assisted with the grant application and who demonstrated an unwavering dedication to the students. Others who assisted the district with the Harkin grants are: Don Kenworthy, retired teacher/electrician who did much of the work and shared his expertise throughout the process; Dale Rohe from Feld Equipment for assisting the district in prioritizing needs and installing the fire detection system; mayor Guy Brace for his local support and guidance; and Chris Boswell, maintenance director who provided the labor force for the work and assisted with the repairs.

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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That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Corning 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.●

HAMPTON-DUMONT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Madam 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 Hampton-Dumont 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 Hampton-Dumont Community School District received a 2002 Harkin grant totaling \$1 million which it used to help build an addition and make renovations to Southside Elementary. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, it is the kind of school facility that every child in America deserves. The district also received two fire safety grants totaling \$152,000 to upgrade the fire alarms systems and make other repairs at schools in the district.

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 Hampton-Dumont Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president John Showalter, Kristi Wragge, Verla Pecha, Ryan Winters, Ron Raney, Scott Sackville and Stacy Miller and former board members Teresa Peterson, David Hannah and Harry Birdsell. I would also like to recognize superintendent Todd Lettow, former superintendent Leland Morrison, director of maintenance Vern Wirtjes, elementary principal Dick Nervig and board secretary Lisa Lewis.

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.