

Beach, Jay Merryman, Dick Hessenius, Paul Gassman, Anne Paullus and Dean Stucky and former board members Betsy Macke, Floyd Jury, Jack Lashier, Bob Downey, Kent Loney, Dick Russell, Adrienne Macmillan, Anne Bacon, Linda Borsch, Sally Hansen, Don McKibben, JoAnn Miller, Wayne Sawtelle, Doug Betts, Bob Christenson and Steve Ford. I would also like to recognize superintendent Dr. Marvin Wade; former superintendents Dr. Stephen Williams, Dr. Richard Doyle and Dr. Harrison Cass, Jr.; principals Bonnie Lowry, Brad Clement, Ralph Bryant, Sarah Johnson, Tom Renze, Mick Jurgensen, Bea Niblock, Vicki Vopava, Amy Williams and Tim Holmgren; former principals Jerry Stephens, Pat Kremer, Mary Giese and; finance director Kevin Posekany; former finance directors Larry Pfantz and Dan Gillen; director of buildings and grounds Rick Simpson and architect Dave Schulze from TSP Group.

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 Marshalltown 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.●

MOUNT VERNON 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 Mount Vernon 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 Mount Vernon Community School District received a 2004 Harkin grant totaling \$500,000 which it used to help build a new 93,000 square foot high school. 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 a fire safety grant in 2005, totaling \$25,000, which was used to upgrade existing smoke and fire protection systems at the Middle School.

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 Mount Vernon Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Tom Wieseler, vice president Bob Penn, John Cochrane, Deb Herrmann, Paul Morf, Ann Stoner and Jeff Walberg, and former members, Dean Borg, Todd Tripp, Janet Griffith and Rebecca Brandt. I would also like to recognize superintendent Jeff Schwiebert and business manager Matt Burke.

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 Mount Vernon 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.●

WEST HARRISON 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 West Harrison 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 West Harrison Community School District received a 2002 Harkin grant totaling \$125,000 which it used to help build two new preschool rooms. Since the addition of the preschool program the students are more ready for Kindergarten and there has been an improvement in test scores from children who went through the preschool. 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.

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 West Harrison Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education, president Jason Sherer, Kandi Forbes, Tammy Neill, Zack Olinger and Jerri Lynn Sheppard, and former members, president Walter Utman, president Roger Jenson, Mike Carritt, Dale Davis and Sue Maule. I would also like to recognize superintendent Richard Gerking, principal Doug Barry, and principal Mike Bunde.

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