

Southeast Polk 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.●

ROCK VALLEY 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 Rock Valley 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 Rock Valley Community School District received a 2005 Harkin grant totaling \$500,000 which it used to help build a new elementary school which includes classroom space for pre-kindergarten students and a new library for the school district. The district also renovated space in the high school to provide classrooms for the middle school. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that benefits 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 Rock Valley Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Al Vermeer, vice president Mary Pat Miller, Scott Kooima, Terry Van Maanen and James Van Veldhuizen and former board members Kevin Boeve, Gary Miller and Brian Nelsen. I would also like to recognize superintendent Dennis Mozer, high school principal Dave Meylink, elementary school principal Don

Ortman, business manager Randy Taylor and the many volunteers and leaders of the community group which supported the bond referendum including Cal De Ruyter, Chris Godfredsen, Scott and Ericka Van Kekerix, Terry and Sue Van Maanen, Earl De Bey, Brian and Kris Vande Hoef, Kathleen Jespersen, Chuck Hoogeveen and Darlene Westra.

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 Rock Valley 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 LIBERTY 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 Liberty 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 school district received a 2001 Harkin grant totaling \$500,000 with ad-

ditional funding from a bond referendum, local option sales tax and a donation from the West Liberty School Foundation which was used for the construction a new high school. A 2002 grant for \$342,000 was used for the construction of the vocational agriculture greenhouse located at the high school. This school is the 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 Liberty Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the Board of Education, Mike Duytschaver, Priscilla Haessig, Claire LeMay, Kevin Minor and Tim Buysse and former board members Bill Laughlin, Missy Johnson, Scott Harvey, Fay Cline, Karen Lathrop, and Joe Stiff. I would also like to recognize superintendent Robert Mata, former superintendent Rebecca Rodocker, principal Jim Hamilton, and staff members including Tom Anderson, Harry Christofferson and Richard Brand.

The new high school was the result of the dedicated community leadership of Ken Morrison, Bill Cline, Jerry Anderson, Joyce Gauger, Jim Keele, Bob Owen, Geri Owen, Melody Henderson, Tesla Graham, Darren Brooke, Lori Brooke, Mark Johnson, Jan Fulwider, Lyle Zimmerman, Betty Zimmerman, and Bob Cline and the West Liberty School Foundation whose members included Tim Schneider, Linda Riley, Barb Keele, Bill Koellner, Mary Larson, and Jerry Melick.

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