

TRIBUTE TO BLAKE WOMBOLD

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I would like to honor Blake Wombold of Heart Butte, a staff sergeant in the U.S. Army Reserves, for his generous contribution of new shoes for the Heart Butte High School Boys basketball team.

Blake was born in Browning, MT, and is an alumnus of Heart Butte High School, where there were only 19 students in his graduating class. He played basketball throughout his high school career and truly feels basketball is “king” in Indian Country. Blake went on to graduate from Salish Kootenai College with a general science degree. He has been with the Army Reserves for 7 years, is a staff sergeant, E-6, as well as a combat trainer/biomedical equipment technician.

This year marks the second year that Blake has donated new shoes to Heart Butte’s basketball team. Growing up, Blake witnessed the sacrifices his mother, a teacher at Heart Butte School, made to provide for him, and he wanted to be able to give back to the community that supported him.

Staff Sergeant Wombold is currently preparing to deploy overseas. His selfless heart is a true example of what it means to be a Montanan. On behalf of all Montanans, I am proud of his service to our community, State, and Nation. •

REMEMBERING ARCHBISHOP FRANCIS T. HURLEY

• Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, this week Alaska’s faith communities are mourning the loss of Archbishop Emeritus Francis T. Hurley who passed on January 10, 2 days shy of his 89th birthday. Archbishop Hurley will be buried this weekend.

Archbishop Hurley was ordained a priest of the San Francisco Archdiocese in 1951. He came to Alaska in 1970 as the auxiliary bishop of Juneau and was elevated to archbishop of the Archdiocese of Anchorage in 1976. He served a quarter century in that role until 2001. Archbishop Hurley remained active in the life of Alaska’s Catholics until his death. He had a remarkable career that stretched 45 years.

Many come to Alaska from other places and leave a few years later because they failed to take Alaska on its terms. If there is one thing to be said about Archbishop Hurley it is that he understood what it took to be successful in our remote environment. He not only understood what it took to succeed in Alaska. He fully embraced it. He thrived on it.

No roads connect the island communities for which the auxiliary bishop of Juneau was responsible. Bishop Hurley might have stayed in Juneau and waited for his 4,000 parishioners to come to him. Instead he chose the road Alaskans would take. He learned to fly so that he could bring the church to the

people, and he piloted the diocesan plane for more than 5,000 hours over the course of his career.

During his relatively brief tenure in Juneau, Archbishop Hurley created Trays on Sleighs, an Alaska centric interpretation of the senior feeding program known as Meals on Wheels.

He is responsible for three of the most important social service facilities in Anchorage; Covenant House, which serves homeless youth; the Brother Francis Shelter, which serves homeless men; and Clare House, an emergency shelter for women with children and expectant mothers.

All of these facilities exist today because Archbishop Hurley took the initiative to get them built. Near and dear to the archbishop’s heart was the “Joy Community,” which helped Catholics with developmental disabilities prepare to receive the sacraments. And these are just a few of many legacies he has left around the State. He also founded two Catholic newspapers: the Inside Passage in Juneau and the Catholic Anchor in Anchorage.

You might say that this is all part of a day’s work for a Catholic bishop. But understand that Alaska is a very young State and lacks the infrastructure of more established provinces. What Archbishop Hurley did is identify the gaps in the social safety net and move forward with a single-minded determination to fill them.

Archbishop Hurley’s contributions were international in scope. In December 1990, he traveled with Father Michael Shields to Magadan—a city in the Russian far east. In a theater, they offered Christmas mass—the first public mass in the city’s history. Three hundred people attended.

In the following 3 weeks, signatures were gathered to register a new church, and on January 4, 1991, the Church of the Nativity of Jesus was founded. Across the years, Archbishop Hurley traveled there nine times and, on January 14, 2001, celebrated the parish’s 10th anniversary.

As you can see, Archbishop Hurley’s contributions were quite substantial. Yet he was much more than what he did. Archbishop Hurley was beloved for whom he was. He was a charming man with a tremendous sense of humor and a knack for remembering names. He was an engaging conversationalist. At times, it seemed like he was everywhere; at baptisms, at funerals, engaged in the political life of the community, tending to the needs of the homeless and the troubled. From the moment he came to Alaska, Archbishop Hurley was a man in motion, and even in retirement, he never slowed down.

Archbishop Hurley, respected by people of all faiths, was truly a central figure in the spiritual lives of Alaskans for nearly a half century. Every time I pass one of the churches that were built on his watch or the social services facilities he inspired, I will smile and reflect on how blessed I was to know him. •

CONGRATULATING VERMONT ESSAY WINNERS

• Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, since 2010 I have sponsored a State of the Union essay contest for Vermont students. The contest, now in its sixth year, is an opportunity for Vermont’s high school students to articulate what issues they would prioritize if they were President of the United States. A panel of Vermont teachers reviewed all of the essays submitted and selected the top 20. I am proud to say that nearly 800 students wrote essays for this year’s State of the Union contest.

I would like to congratulate each and every finalist and to specifically acknowledge Meredith Holbrook as this year’s winner of the contest. I would also like to recognize Vivian Huang for placing second and Ryan Racicot for placing third. I ask to have printed in the RECORD copies of the winning essays.

The material follows:

MEREDITH HOLBROOK, MILTON HIGH SCHOOL
(WINNER)

My fellow Americans, today the United States has the strongest military in the world. Our nation has the number one economy. We have the longest running democratic government in history. If we want to be considered the greatest in the world, the home of the free, the land of opportunity, then we must face the challenges before us.

In 2014, 48.1 million Americans lived in food insecure homes, of this, 15.3 million were children. This equates to 14 percent of households being food insecure. How can the wealthiest nation in the world be unable to feed its hungry? We have the full capability of providing for those in need. We should not allow politics to stop us from caring for our citizens in need. It is impossible to expect the people of this country to be functioning members of society without adequate nourishment. The solution to this problem is simple: feed America’s hungry. I believe that if we were to create a cabinet level agency dedicated specifically to food-insecurity, we would be bettering the common good of America. Devoting ten billion dollars from the federal budget would make a tremendous improvement in the number of food-insecure homes. It may be a bold move to make, but our nation cannot move forward until our people are no longer hungry.

Alongside hunger is homelessness. On one given night in America, about 560,000 citizens are homeless, and about 200,000 of those people are in families. It should be the basic right of our people to have shelter and security. The wound of homelessness cannot be solved with night time shelters. Homeless people must be provided with long-term shelters if they are ever to be productive members of society. In order to solve this issue, we must invest in job counseling. Many homeless citizens are homeless due to the inability to acquire a job. If people had the chance to have a clean interview outfit, as well as proper interview instruction, there would not be as many people sleeping on the streets. In order to make this happen, we must have more people trained in the expertise of job counseling, and more programs helping to aid homeless citizens. Again, this would mean funding such programs. A small cost to pay to get Americans off the streets.

How a nation treats its elderly says a lot about its character. We will not be a nation that ignores the needs of its senior citizens. Today, many seniors cannot comfortably retire. They are often forced to choose between