

First lady's address to service-learning conferees.

I am so pleased to know that over 1,200 of you are gathered here today in support of service-learning.

I know that each of you has taken a leadership role in helping our nation develop an ethic of service. Your efforts are part of the President's vision to restore America's tradition of community service as a means of meeting our country's most critical needs.

One expression of that vision is our support of Learn and Serve America, a program which sponsors many of your activities. Another is AmeriCorps, which provides young people educational opportunities in exchange for full-time service.

Rekindling this American tradition relies on people like you -- people who instill in youth concern for the well-being of all the nation's citizens. The young people you involve in service-learning are gaining a sense of social responsibility they will carry throughout their lives.

I want to acknowledge the accomplishments of service-learning in improving the academic performance of America's youth. And, therefore, the part it plays in

helping our country reach its education goals for the year 2000.

High school students who were at risk of dropping out have told me that since they've been involved in their communities, they haven't missed a day of school. They tell me that their formal education has more meaning, and that they're proud of what they contribute.

College students tell me that their service experience has motivated them to learn as well as shaped their career goals. A pre-med student who had been working toward a research career said that her afternoons spent with an inner city health clinic caused her to change her focus to helping people. She now plans to become a doctor who works with the underserved. In her view, that's the ultimate contribution anyone can make to society.

I think these stories of personal transformation -- of changed lives -- is testament to the power of service learning.

It's because of stories like these that I am such a strong advocate. I can't thank you enough for your efforts to put service-learning in every school across the country.

I want to offer my sincere congratulations to the National Service Fair winners for their outstanding projects. And I also want to thank them for the significant impact they're making in our schools and communities.

I know you have a lot to accomplish in Philadelphia and that the service learning community will grow as a result of your efforts. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity.

March 2, 1995

TO: The First Lady

FR: Mike Berning
Deputy Director, Public Affairs

RE: Briefing -- National Service Learning Conference

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The Event

National Service-Learning Conference (March 8-11) sponsored by the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) and hosted by the Pennsylvania Institute for Environmental and Community Service-Learning. Close to 1800 conferees expected. Participants include: students, teachers, college professors, researchers, community leaders, policy makers, and foundation administrators.

Note: This is in response to a request from Carolyn Elliot (Department of Education, Arkansas) asking the First Lady to speak at the conference.

Purpose

Service-learning is a way of teaching that integrates schools and communities for learning (i.e. experiential learning). Service-learning improves academics, citizenship, and employment skills, making it a widely accepted school reform strategy. Communities are impacted by the improvements to the quality of life and the discovery through service-learning that young people are valuable resources - as volunteers, problem solvers, and community leaders. The conference is an effort to gather together these ideas and the people who will make them work.

Importance to the Corporation for National Service

The groups that organized the conference are major Learn and Serve grantees. We need to support them. The technical assistance services ("how to" information, curriculum strategies, teacher training workshops) they provide to other grantees is foundational to the operation of the Learn and Serve program.

The larger issue is taking the opportunity to finally link two powerful forces supportive of service-learning -- the national service and school reform movements.

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