

strengthen and uplift us. Among the most precious of these are our families.

Families come in many forms and sizes. They can number several generations or only one; they can include birth parents and stepparents, foster children and adopted children. Families are created by ties of blood or law, but they are sustained by ties of love and caring.

Few people in our lives will have so profound an effect on us as our family members. From the day we are born, the people who live with us, nurture us, and guide us play a crucial role in shaping the kind of men and women we become. They challenge us to look beyond ourselves and to respect and care for others. At their best, they help us to be our best. Families are the most basic—and the most important—unit of our society.

Recognizing this, we realize that many of our dreams for America begin with strong families. We want to be a caring people, and the lessons of tolerance, sharing, and compassion are best taught in the home. We want to be a peaceful people, and we look to families to teach our young people how to respect one another's differences and resolve disputes without resorting to violence. We want to be wise people, so we need families that value education and acknowledge the importance of lifelong learning.

Nothing is more important to our future than preserving and promoting strong, loving families. This week, as we gather with our own families to celebrate Thanksgiving, let us resolve to do all we can as individuals, and as a Nation to help families who are in need, to provide support and encouragement for troubled families, and to promote policies at the local, State, and Federal level that will help America's families to flourish.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 23 through November 29, 1997, as National Family Week. I call upon Federal, State, and local officials to honor American families with appropriate programs and activities; I encourage educators, community organizations, and religious leaders to celebrate the strength and values we draw from family relationships; and I urge all the people of the United States to reaffirm their family ties and to reach out to others in friendship and goodwill.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7055 of November 22, 1997

National Family Caregivers Week, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During this season of thanksgiving, when we reflect on the many blessings that have been bestowed on us as individuals and as a Nation, we are espe-

cially grateful for the love of our families and friends. One of the most profound ways in which that love is expressed is through the generous support provided by caregivers to those who need help if they are to remain in their homes and communities.

Caregivers reflect family and community life at its best. Thanks to their efforts, Americans with disabilities and a growing number of elderly Americans are able to stay in familiar surroundings and to maintain their dignity and independence. Caregivers not only enhance the quality of life for those they serve, but also greatly reduce the demands on the formal system of caregiving services in our Nation.

The statistics describing caregivers in America today tell an extraordinary story of generosity and compassion. Nearly one in four households is involved in caring for a relative or other loved one in need, providing a range of assistance from personal care to household help to transportation. Thirty percent of caregivers are caring for two or more people, and 64 percent hold down jobs while providing such care. Caregivers share not only their time, but also their resources, spending some \$2 billion a month of their own assets for groceries, medicine, and other aid.

There is another side to caregiving in America today. Many older relatives now take care of children whose parents, for whatever reason, are no longer able to provide that care themselves. These generous men and women, who in many cases have already raised families and are looking forward to pursuing their own interests in retirement, embrace the challenges of parenting a new generation of young people. They give millions of our most vulnerable youth the opportunity to grow up in stable, loving homes.

These everyday heroes among us deserve our lasting gratitude and respect. This week, as we honor the many contributions that family caregivers make to the quality of our national life, let us resolve to work through our community, religious, social, business, and other organizations to offer programs and services that will provide caregivers the support and encouragement they need to carry out their vital responsibilities.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 23 through November 29, 1997, as National Family Caregivers Week. I call upon Government officials, businesses, communities, educators, volunteers, and all the people of the United States to acknowledge the invaluable efforts of caregivers this week and throughout the year.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7056 of December 1, 1997**World AIDS Day, 1997**

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For more than 15 years, America and the world have faced the challenges posed by HIV and AIDS. This devastating disease respects no borders and does not discriminate. In every city, town, and community, we have lost sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, life partners and friends. HIV and AIDS have affected us all, regardless of income, region, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or age. Sadly, both the number of people living with AIDS and the number of new HIV infections is rising worldwide. This year, as we observe the tenth World AIDS Day, we recognize with particular concern the toll HIV and AIDS continue to take on our children and youth.

The statistics are heartbreaking. In America alone, more than 7,500 children under the age of 13 have been diagnosed with AIDS. Every hour of every day, two more Americans under the age of 21 become infected with HIV. Around the world, more than 1 million children are living with HIV and AIDS. Twelve hundred children die of AIDS each day, even as 1,600 more become infected with the HIV virus. Compounding this tragedy is the terrible reality that many of the world's young people who are living with HIV and AIDS do not have access to the life-extending drugs and medical protocols that our scientists and doctors have developed. There is also a critical shortage of prescription drugs suitable for children suffering from pediatric HIV and AIDS. Of the 14 approved drugs for adults and adolescents, only five are approved for children.

From the earliest days of my Administration, we have sought to meet the challenges posed by AIDS with increased resources and action. I am proud of our success, with the cooperation of the Congress, in dramatically increasing funding for AIDS prevention measures and research. Such programs and research have helped to slow the spread of HIV and AIDS and have made possible the production of new drugs that are extending the lives of people with HIV and AIDS here at home and around the world.

But our progress against the scourge of AIDS has not been the result of government action alone. We have been able to make these great strides in understanding and treating HIV and AIDS thanks in large part to the hard work and commitment of thousands of researchers, health care providers, and clinical trial participants. I am proud as well of the resounding response of courage, compassion, responsibility, and love that the AIDS crisis has brought forth from our people. The lesbian and gay community, particularly in the early years of this epidemic, energized existing organizations and created new institutions to respond to the unmet needs of those living with HIV and AIDS. Educators and activists, members of religious and civic groups, business and labor organizations, and tens of thousands of other men and women of goodwill have joined together to comfort the afflicted and bring an end to this disease.

We can rejoice in our progress, but we cannot rest. In May, I announced a new HIV vaccine initiative, and I am pleased that the global community has joined together in making the development of this vaccine a top inter-