

of admiration for their commitment to our youth.

I have found, however, some teachers are special and go beyond the call of duty to lead their students toward a rewarding and productive life. Today, I rise to speak about one such teacher who is retiring this year, Nicholas "Nick" Leist.

For thirty-six years Mr. Leist has dedicated his life teaching music to young people in Missouri. Mr. Leist has not only been an educator, he has been a friend and inspiration to literally thousands of students. Over the last thirty years, he has taught more than 9,000 students at Jackson High School, and his musicians have had a phenomenal record, having achieved twenty-seven consecutive number one ratings at district music contests. More than eight dozen students have gone on to become teachers themselves, following in the steps of their mentor.

On May 5, 1998, Mr. Leist conducted his last Jackson High School band concert which brought tears to the eyes of students and their Mr. Leist. They will miss Nick Leist at Jackson High School next year; however, the impact he had on students will live on for generations through the people he inspired to greater personal heights. I join the many who wish Mr. Leist happiness in the years to come. ●

HONORING TIMOTHY CORDES

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I would like to bring to the attention of Members of Congress and the country a young constituent of mine.

Some of you may have read about Timothy Cordes in Monday's Washington Post. For those of you who didn't, Tim—who is from Eldridge, Iowa—just received a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from Notre Dame, with a 3.99 grade point average. Tim was the valedictorian of his class and will begin medical school at the University of Wisconsin this summer. These would be outstanding accomplishments for any young person. They are especially remarkable in this case, because Tim is blind—only the second blind person ever admitted to a U.S. medical school.

Tim has a genetic condition that gradually diminished his vision until he was blind when he was 14. Doctors diagnosed him with the disease when he was two. They talked about how blindness would limit Tim's life. But his parents wouldn't accept that for their son. His mother said that after talking with the doctors, "I went home and just ignored everything they said." Thank goodness for that!

I have spent much of my time in the Senate working toward a society in which all Americans, those with disabilities and those without, have the same opportunities to succeed. That's what all people with disabilities want—an equal opportunity to succeed. Some will succeed and some won't, but it will be because of their abilities, not their disabilities. Tim personifies the fact

that when society accommodates people with disabilities to allow them to reach their full potential, we all benefit.

At Notre Dame, Tim overcame his blindness by asking fellow students to describe the molecular structures they were studying and by using his computer to re-create the images in three-dimensional forms on a special monitor he could touch. In addition to his academic achievements, Tim earned a black belt in tae kwon do and jujitsu, went to football games and debated with this friends whether the old or new "Star Trek" is better.

Tim's biochemistry professor called him a remarkable young man and the most brilliant student he's ever had. One of Tim's roommates said that he was "simply amazing to be around."

Tim doesn't mind being an inspiration to others, but he doesn't think of himself that way. In his words, "[i]t was just hard work." Well, that's for sure!

For my part, I am honored to represent Tim and his parents and to be able to take this time to congratulate him and his parents for all their great work. Congratulations!

Mr. President, I ask that the full text of the Washington Post article be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From the Washington Post, May 18, 1998]
BLIND VALEDICTORIAN IS HEADED TO MED SCHOOL; NOTRE DAME STUDENT CREDITS "JUST HARD WORK" FOR HIS SUCCESS

(By Jon Jeter)

SOUTH BEND, IN.—Sure but sightless, Timothy Cordes arrived on the University of Notre Dame campus four years ago, an 18-year-old freshman from Eldridge, Iowa, who wanted to enroll in the biochemistry program. Faculty members tried, politely, to dissuade him. Just how, they wondered aloud, could a blind student keep up with the rigorous courses and demanding laboratory work of biochemistry?

Cordes graduated today from Notre Dame with a degree in biochemistry and a 3.991 grade-point average. He was the last of Notre Dame's 2,000 seniors to enter the crowded auditorium for commencement. His German shepherd, Electra, led him to the lectern to deliver the valedictory speech as his classmates rose, cheered, applauded and yelled his name affectionately.

Cordes starts medical school in two months, only the second blind person ever admitted to a U.S. medical school. He does not plan to practice medicine. His interest is in research, he said: "I've just always loved science."

His life has been both an act of open, mannerly defiance and unshakable faith. And this unassuming, slightly built young man with a choirboy's face awes acquaintances and friends.

Armed with Electra, a high-powered personal computer and a quick wit, Cordes managed a near-perfect academic record, an A-minus in a Spanish class the only blemish. Two weeks ago, he earned a black belt in the martial arts tae kwon do and jujitsu.

"He is really a remarkable young man," said Paul Helquist, a Notre Dame biochemistry professor. Helquist at first had doubts but ultimately recommended Cordes for medical school. "He is by far the most brilliant student I've ever come across in my 24 years of teaching," the professor said.

If others find some noble lessons in this life, Cordes perceives it more prosaically: He's merely shown up for life and done what was necessary to reach his goals.

"If people are inspired by what I've done, that's great, but the truth is that I did it all for me. It was just hard work. It's like getting the black belt. It's not like I just took one long lesson. It was showing up every day, and sweating and learning and practicing. You have your bad days and you just keep going."

Despite his academic accomplishments, Cordes led a fairly ordinary life in college, debating, for example, the merits of the old and new "Star Trek" series with Patrick Murowsky, a 22-year-old psychology major from Cleveland who roomed with Cordes their sophomore year.

"The thing about Tim is that he's fearless and he just seems to have this faith. Once we were late for a football game and we had to run to the stadium. He had no qualms about running at top speed while I yelled 'jump,' or I would yell 'duck' and he would duck. And we made it. He is simply amazing to be around sometimes," said Murowsky.

Cordes has Leber's disease, a genetic condition that gradually diminished his vision until he was blind at age 14.

When doctors at the University of Iowa first diagnosed the disease when he was 2, "it was the saddest moment of my life," said his mother, Therese, 50.

"The doctors . . . told us: 'He won't be able to do this, and don't expect him to be able to do this,'" Therese Cordes recalled. "So I went home and just ignored everything they said."

The ability to conceptualize images has greatly helped Cordes in his studies, Helquist said. The study of biochemistry relies heavily on graphics and diagrams to illustrate complicated molecular structures. Cordes compensated for his inability to see by asking other students to describe the visual sides or by using his computer to re-create the images in three-dimensional forms on a special screen he could touch.

Cordes applied to eight medical schools. Only the University of Wisconsin accepted him. (The first blind medical student was David Hartman, who graduated from Temple University in 1976 and is a psychiatrist in Roanoke, Va.)

"Tim has always exceeded people's expectations of him," said Teresa Cordes, who, with her husband, Tom, watched Tim graduate. "He really does inspire me." ●

TRIBUTE TO DR. JOHN H. MOORE JR.

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Dr. John H. Moore Jr. for his humanitarian efforts on behalf of Operation Smile, an organization that provides free medical care to children around the world.

Dr. Moore distinguished himself when he started the Philadelphia Chapter of Operation Smile in 1988. Since then he has expanded this group to provide annual missions to Nicaragua, the Philippines, Vietnam, Liberia, Kenya and other third world countries. Locally, Operation Smile provides free care for school children in the Philadelphia area. Working with philanthropic organizations, the group brings physicians from other countries to Philadelphia for advanced training in techniques used to reconstruct child deformities.