

home and community-based settings. We now know that we are not talking about merely a preference for non-institutional care—but a legal right to it.

In my capacity as ranking member of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, I have held numerous hearings on long-term care and the importance of supporting the continuum of care options. Assisted living is one of the most significant of these options and offers a real choice to those Americans wanting assistance outside of an institutional setting—a preference that will only grow as more of our baby boomers look for help with long-term care. Today, I salute the Louisiana Assisted Living Association for taking time to educate and improve awareness about a service that I believe can and will improve the lives of many of our Nation's disabled and elderly.●

#### HONORING KAREN MAYRY

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I stand today to recognize an individual who is a dedicated advocate for the blind in this Nation, and especially in my home State of South Dakota.

Karen was raised in Hibbing, MN. The second of five children, she learned at an early age to cope with people's afflictions. Her brother Robert was born with Down syndrome. It was from this early exposure that Karen gained some of the beliefs that would carry over in later life. At age 11, Karen, herself was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes—the disease that was to define the rest of her life.

In 1965, Karen married her long-time love, Marshall. While living in Tacoma, WA, where Marshall was to finish out his military obligation, Karen found a job teaching in the Clover Park school system. In her first year on the job, she experienced her first hemorrhage in her right eye which resulted in complete vision loss in that eye. Because of her love of educating children, she remained on the job teaching despite experiencing a traumatic physical ailment.

Marshall and Karen moved to Denver, CO after his military obligation was fulfilled. While in Denver, Karen lost still more of her vision and for all purposes became “totally blind” and underwent eye surgery with the hope of restoring some vision to her right eye. The surgery was deemed a cosmetic failure. It was also at this time, that doctors discovered that she was beginning to experience renal failure.

In 1969, Karen and Marshall moved to Rapid City where she was hired on as a Juvenile Probation officer. She remained at the position for 6 years until her renal failure had continued to progress so much that she was no longer able to continue her duties. Experiencing kidney failure soon after, her loving brother, David, offered one of his kidneys. After many months of complications delaying the surgery, the transplant was successful. Three weeks later, she left the hospital and

her kidney functions have remained excellent for the past 27 years.

Following the successful kidney treatment, she was approached by representatives of National Federation of the Blind to become a member. The philosophy of the NFB matched her own; one of independence and the abilities of blind persons, if given a chance. Soon after joining, she became active that same year and was elected state president, a quite remarkable accomplishment.

Karen Mayry is the long-time president of the South Dakota Federation of the Blind. For many years, she has provided tireless advocacy for the blind residents of South Dakota and for the disabled population of the State. Under her presidency the State affiliate has grown to five local chapters. She has proposed and lobbied for and had legislation passed bettering the lives of blind South Dakotans. She has testified before the Senate, investigating transportation for the handicapped and has annually made trips to our Nation's Capital to lobby for issues of importance to the blind of the country.

She is dedicated to advocating issues of importance, and she is committed to breaking down the structural and attitudinal barriers that impact the blind and disabled community in south Dakota. Her list of organizations is vast and her accomplishments and awards are countless.

Despite various physical ailments in recent years, Karen refuses to be sidelined and continues her stalwart advocacy. Her vitality and energy is commendable and her advocacy and education over the years on issues affecting blind and disabled individuals have proven very successful. She works hard to educate and advocate for the Americans with Disabilities Act, helps promote the skills and talents of the blind and educates the business community about the importance of hiring individuals with disabilities.

South Dakotans with disabilities have many fighters in their corner, and Karen Mayry is one of their most ardent advocates. Karen doesn't mince words with elected officials, I, for one, have appreciated her frankness and candor over the years. Her insight is valuable on important issues, not only on matters directly affecting blind residents, but also in issues vital to all South Dakotans, disabled and non-disabled alike.

As residents in my State prepare for the annual South Dakota Federation of the Blind Convention in Sioux Falls, I take this opportunity to congratulate and commend Karen Mayry for her many years of outstanding advocacy work for the blind. I applaud her dedication and commitment, appreciate her advocacy, and wish her the best in her own individual battle to come. I look forward to continuing my work with Karen concerning issues of importance to the blind and disabled citizens of south Dakota. It is with great honor that I share her impressive accomplishments with my colleagues.●

#### CONGRATULATING ALISA BARTON

● Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I would like to take the opportunity to honor Mrs. Alisa Barton of Hopkinsville, KY. Salvation Army welfare coordinator Alisa Barton was honored nationwide with an Award of Excellence in Social Service at the National Social Services Conference in Pittsburgh on Tuesday, March 20.

As former military child and wife, Mrs. Barton knows firsthand the hardship Army families can experience, especially during times of deployment. Mrs. Barton has continuously worked to help alleviate the needs of families remaining at home while their loved ones serve this country in Afghanistan and Iraq.

She developed a program called Homefront War Relief, which has received national recognition for helping the families of deployed Fort Campbell soldiers. The Homefront War Relief program, partnered with Wal-Mart, allowed the Salvation Army to assist 743 military families resulting in the largest military assistance effort the Salvation Army of Hopkinsville has ever done. Throughout 2003, 5,000 military personnel and their families received assistance in the form of comfort kits to deployed soldiers, food and clothing, holiday meals, and Bibles and inspirational books to troops.

Mrs. Barton is dedicated to helping those who come to the Salvation Army in need. She began working with the Salvation Army by ringing donations bells and describes her work as a labor of love spreading the Christian faith and helping people. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Mrs. Barton. She is a wonderful asset to Kentucky and an inspiration to us all.●

#### CONGRATULATING MARSHALL ALL-STAR CHEERLEADERS

● Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I would like to take the opportunity to honor the Marshall All-Star Cheerleaders for their recent success at the national championships in Indianapolis.

The Marshall All-Star Cheerleaders is made up of girls from grades 1-12 competing in three age levels, Peewee grades 1-4, Youth 3-6, and Senior 6-12. They are from Marshall, Graves, Lyon, and McCracken counties and students at Melissa's Gymnastics in Benton, KY.

The squads spent hours in preparation for the fierce competition they faced in Indianapolis. Other squads were from Indiana, Kansas, Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia, Maryland, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Kentucky. They competed in dance, cheering, and tumbling, and came out on top in the end.

The Marshall All-Star Cheerleaders were the national champions in all three age levels. They are to be commended for this high honor. Their hard work and dedication paid off, and I join