

The South Tama Community School District received a 2004 Harkin grant totaling \$500,000 which it used to help build a new elementary school. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, it is the kind of school facility that every child in America deserves.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the South Tama Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Michelle Yuska, vice president Ron Hala, Jackie Dvorak, Mark McFate and Anne Michael and former board members G. Joe Lyon, Margaret Kubik, Alan Upah and Donald Wacha. I would also like to recognize superintendent Kerri Nelson, former superintendent Larry Molacek, business manager Joanna Hofer, former business manager John Legg and director of buildings and grounds Tim Downs.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the South Tama Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them and wish them a very successful new school year.●

WATERLOO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Waterloo Community School District and to report on their participation in a unique Fed-

eral partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Waterloo Community School District received 15 Harkin grants totaling \$5,434,952 which it used to help modernize and make safety improvements throughout the district. The Waterloo Community School District received seven construction grants totaling \$3,786,616 which have helped the district build Walter Cunningham School of Excellence, Irving Elementary School, Lincoln Elementary School, and Poyner Elementary School. The grants have also helped with a classroom addition and renovations at Lowell Elementary School and with renovation projects at East High School, West High School and Kingsley Elementary School. These schools are the modern, state-of-the-art facilities that befit the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, they are the kind of schools that every child in America deserves.

The district also received eight fire safety grants totaling \$1,648,336 to install fire alarm systems and make other repairs at East High School, Central Middle School, Hoover Middle School, Logan Middle School, Bunker Middle School, McKinstry Elementary School, and Kingsley Elementary School. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

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and grounds Marty Metcalf, former director of buildings and grounds Jack Fitzgerald, board secretary Sharon Miller, along with a number of building principals including Mary Meier, Bob Tyson, Martin Van Roekel, Dr. Gail Moon, Elizabeth Crowley, Vicky Smith, Dr. Mary Jo Wagner, Kari Gunderson, Bob Wright, Dr. Loleta Montgomery, Brian Hartman, Phillip Anderson, Jennifer Ortman, Marla Padgett, and Pam Zeigler.

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TRIBUTE TO VICE ADMIRAL CONRAD C. LAUTENBACHER, JR.

● Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, although many Americans may never have heard of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, the agency plays a significant role in the daily lives of Americans, whether it is providing daily weather forecasts, supporting marine commerce, or monitoring our climate.

For nearly 7 years, NOAA has been guided by the leadership of VADM Conrad C. Lautenbacher. When he retires on October 31, Admiral Lautenbacher will leave a lasting legacy at NOAA that has helped strengthen our knowledge and understanding of our oceans and atmosphere.

Life on Earth relies on the ocean. Our oceans regulate our planet's climate, support global commerce, and provide food. The livelihoods of millions of Americans rely on our oceans. Yet, we know little about what lies beneath the surface of our oceans. Ninety-five percent of our oceans are unexplored. Working with the Senate Commerce Committee, Admiral Lautenbacher commissioned America's first ship for ocean exploration, the *Okeanos Explorer*. The ship's missions will include reconnaissance to search unknown areas and map the deep seafloor. Through telepresence, the