

PAT now. I have had the anecdotal results, but scientifically we have determined, through sound research, that at age 3, PAT children are more advanced in language, social development, problem solving, and other cognitive abilities than their peers; and parents who participate in PAT are more confident about their parenting and more involved in the children's schooling, which is a key component of a child's success in school.

I can tell you also that when you talk to an elementary school educator or administrator they can tell you which children have been in the Parents as Teachers program because it is that obvious from the start. A 2008 published, peer-reviewed study of almost 8,000 Missouri children found that 82 percent of low-income children who participated in both Parents as Teachers and preschool entered kindergarten ready to learn, as compared to only 64 percent of similar children who had no involvement in either service.

At third grade, 88 percent of low-income children who participated in both Parents as Teachers and preschool received a benchmark level of performance on the Missouri Assessment Program Communication Arts test, compared to 77 percent of similar children with no involvement.

These results confirm what I know from personal experience and have heard from so many parents in PAT—it is a tremendous benefit to them and their children.

To date, more than 2 million families nationwide have received the education and support of PAT programs. These are accomplishments of which we can be proud, but we need to do more. There are more families that can and should be reached by this life-changing program, which is why I have introduced the Education Begins at Home Act with Senators MURRAY and CLINTON. This legislation will establish the first dedicated Federal funding stream to support the expansion of PAT.

Our bill has had strong bipartisan support in the past, and I expect it will continue. It would authorize \$400 million over 3 years to States to expand access to Parents as Teachers. It would provide \$50 million over 3 years to fund innovative ideas and partnerships at the local level to expand access to PAT in communities with limited English proficiency, and it would provide \$50 million over 3 years to reach more military families by expanding access to PAT in schools and community organizations that serve military families.

As a side note, we have established the program at several military facilities in Missouri where one parent is often gone overseas, and the family may not have any normal family network to help them. This brings the parents together and it also provides them some of the resources that they might get from a grandmother or an aunt or even an uncle.

Parents as Teachers builds on the principle that babies are born to learn

and that the child's parent is the first and most important teacher. PAT gives parents the tools they need to prepare children for success in school and life, and helps parents become more active participants in their child's education. I believe the expansion of Parents as Teachers is a sound investment in the future of our children and our families, and I hope my colleagues will join me in it.

VISION CARE FOR KIDS ACT

I, also, wish to add comments about another extremely important act to ensure the success of children—the Vision Care for Kids Act. Eighty percent of what kids learn in their early years is visual, but one in four children has a vision problem that can interfere with learning, and only one in three children receive any form of preventive vision care before school.

As I said, children have tremendous potential to learn and succeed, but untreated vision disorders can lead to permanent vision loss. I know that, personally, because I suffer from a permanent vision loss due to a previously undiagnosed condition which wasn't learned about until it was too late. If the condition had been discovered and treated before I entered school, I could have avoided a lifetime of vision loss—and I might have done a much better job of catching fly balls in the outfield.

The Vision Care for Kids Act, which I have reintroduced with Senator DODD, establishes a grant program to complement and encourage existing State efforts to improve children's vision care. Ensuring good vision for kids will help them see bright futures ahead of them. I invite my colleagues to join us in supporting children and families through these important bills.

For the vision care, talk with Senator DODD or me. For Parents as Teachers, talk with Senator MURRAY or me. We would love to have you on these two important bills.

I thank the Chair and I thank the staff for according me this opportunity.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT CHRISTOPHER G. SMITH

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor the life and heroic service of SSG Christopher Smith. Staff Sergeant Smith, a member of the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, died in Baghdad, Iraq, on December 24, 2008, from injuries sustained when his military vehicle overturned into a canal. He was 28 years old.

After spending 2 years at Kellogg Community College in Michigan studying for a career in sports medicine, Staff Sergeant Smith joined the Army in 2001. He served in Iraq from March 2005 to February 2006 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and returned to the country for his second deployment in September of last year. As a cannon crewmember, Staff Sergeant Smith

played an integral role operating high technology weapons systems. He distinguished himself as a strong leader within "Bulldog" Company and would lead his unit in his captain's absence. His extraordinary bravery and talent earned him more than 11 awards and commendations during his service.

Staff Sergeant Smith is remembered by those who knew him as a true patriot who always looked out for his fellow soldiers and believed strongly in his mission. He was deeply admired by his men, so much so that five members of his squadron incurred hypothermia in a dogged and heroic effort to rescue him from the canal. He was often hunting and fishing, rooting for the University of Michigan Wolverines, and grilling brisket and ribs for his friends. Most of all, he was a devoted husband and father.

Mr. President, Teddy Roosevelt famously said, "it is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Staff Sergeant Smith sacrificed his life for this Nation as a man who knew that his country needed him to be "in the arena," helping others. He accepted the risks of his job with extraordinary professionalism and served with honor and a dedication to duty that was second to none. We cannot repay our debt nor replace his loss.

To Staff Sergeant Smith's mother Donna, his father Virgil, his wife Bobbi Jo, his son Adler, his brother Phillip, and all his friends and family, I know no words that can assuage the pain you must feel. I hope that in time your grief will give way to the pride you must feel for Chris for all he accomplished and for all the lives he touched. His country will always honor his legacy.

SAVING KIDS FROM DANGEROUS DRUGS ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague, Senator FEINSTEIN, in reintroducing the Saving Kids from Dangerous Drugs Act. I believe we have an ongoing moral obligation in this country to ensure our young people have every opportunity to grow up without being accosted by drug pushers at every turn, whether on TV, in the movies, or on the way to school.