Likewise, Yunker’s son is worried, but also excited for his mom. Joe Yunker, an emergency medical technician in Jessamine County, said he knows that being a Peace Corps volunteer is one of his mother’s life dreams. He’s heard about it since he was 11. “My mom can do anything,” he said.

‘SAINT’ RITA

- Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, earlier this month, the Burlington Free Press chose for its 1999 Vermont of the Year, a woman who is widely recognized as the guardian angel of the homeless in Vermont, Rita Markley. For as long as I have known her, Rita has been a passionate, articulate, and very vocal advocate for our most needy residents. She has raised awareness that even in Vermont, there are people without a roof over their heads, and most importantly, that these people have names, and faces, and that many of them are us. They are people who can have a better defender. I would like to have printed in the RECORD the text of the Burlington Free Press article announcing the selection of Rita as Vermont of the Year, and offer my congratulations and sincere thanks to Vermont’s media for this powerful reminder of something Vermonters cannot ignore. Some people who otherwise would have slept in a cold, damp hotel in December are now warm and dry, thanks to Rita. We are grateful.

Many homeless people are veterans. Many are victims of the national trend to close mental hospitals and other institutions, who have not subsequently received sufficient community services.

Mostly, the homeless are people that Vermonters in good homes interact with all the time. They are the homeless in hotels. Though this work formerly paid enough to support people, today a full-time job is no guarantee of a place to live. Of the families who used COTS last year, half had at least one person working. Yet wages at entry level jobs have fallen so far behind the cost of living in Vermont, the number of homeless families has quadrupled in only four years.

Meanwhile the federal government, which used to build affordable housing units by the tons of thousands, has stopped. Urban renewal programs have demolished low-income housing, worsening the supply shortage.

Housing developers focus on higher-priced homes; the state’s median house selling price rose 20 percent this decade, placing a solution farther out of reach. The Clinton administration has responded by expanding rental assistance money. But in Vermont, roughly 1,000 people eligible for these funds face a major obstacle: no eligible apartments average a vacancy rate of zero.

More than shelter

Markley came to COTS as a part-timer who wanted to write fiction. Now she is a full-time champion of people who otherwise would not have a voice—or a place to go.

COTS offers much more than a meal and a bed, though. It provides a continuum of services: health care, child care, job training and coaching for interviews, help with school, summer programs for children, mental health counseling, and on and on. For those who strive, these programs are a strong ladder into good housing and greater opportunities.

Most importantly, COTS offers its clients hope—that they can escape dependency and attain self-sufficiency. “Rita believes in the resourcefulness of the human spirit,” said United Way executive director Gretchen Morse. “She never gives up.”

It works. Seventy percent of the people who complete COTS’ training programs have a job and an address. A new effort to link apartment hunters with landlords who accept federal subsidies has found 40 individuals and 60 families a place to live—even in this no-vacancy market.

COTS has therefore earned the national accolades that have poured in from advocacy groups and the U.S. Department of Housing.

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE

TRIBUTE TO THE EMPLOYEES OF CATERPILLAR

- Mr. COVERDELL. Madam President, every once in awhile, we are reminded that all the important issues we are working on pale by comparison to the countless acts of charity and compassion that occur all across America on a daily basis. I want to recount for my colleagues one such act, which occurred in my home state of Georgia, appropriately enough, during the holiday season—an act that puts a human face on the compassion that is innate in the American people.

A.J. Bentley III, 3½ years old, is a constituent of mine who is dying of cancer. When he was first diagnosed, his doctors told his parents that the disease looks bleak, the disease has not taken away his passion and fascination with tractors, farm and earth moving equipment—the kind which Georgia is blessed to have plenty. Upon learning of A.J.’s terminal illness, our office contacted the good people at Caterpillar to see if they could help to lift the spirits of a dying boy and his family. Caterpillar, without hesitation and pulled out all of the stops. First, Caterpillar offered to have A.J. tour their plant in Peoria, Illinois so he could see first hand how all the equipment was built and how it worked. Unfortunately, A.J.’s medical condition prevented him from being able to fly to Illinois. Plan ‘B’ was to have A.J. visit the John Deere Products Division of Caterpillar in LaGrange, Georgia. On the day his dream would be fulfilled, A.J. was not feeling well and unable to make the 1 hour drive to LaGrange. Undeterred, the people of Caterpillar would not let A.J.’s illness keep them from fulfilling his dream. Because everyone at the LaGrange plant wanted a chance to help, there was a lottery that day in LaGrange.
The grand prize was the chance to drive to A.J.'s hometown of Thomasville, Georgia and have his dream come true in person. The lucky few saw first-hand the joy of a young boy, decked out in his Caterpillar hat and playing on his new Caterpillar equipment that he loves so much. As the group was leaving to return to LaGrange, A.J. waved good-bye, then with a burst of energy proclaimed "this is the best day of my life". All who helped make this possible, I know, feel their own happiness that words could never adequately express.

There are days when all we seem to hear about is how people have become so self-absorbed in their own lives. I offer this example as a case in point of the compassion and good will that exists in LaGrange, in Georgia, and in all life across the world. When we are making a difference on a daily basis— one child, one American at a time. I salute the people of Caterpillar and I am humbled by their act of kindness. I know I speak for all of us when I say, A.J. has touched all of our hearts and he and his family will always be in our thoughts and prayers.

TRIBUTE TO DR. M. GAZI YASARGIL

Mrs. LINCOLN. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to the achievements of a distinguished member of the Arkansas medical community. Dr. M. Gazi Yasargil is recognized worldwide for his work in the field of neurosurgery and we in Arkansas are fortunate to benefit from his talents.

Dr. Yasargil's contributions to his field were recently acclaimed when Neurosurgery, the official journal of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons, recognized him as "The Man of the Century." This honor acknowledges Dr. Yasargil's significant impact on the field of neurosurgery in the second half of the 20th century.

Professor Yasargil received his medical degree from the University of Basel, Switzerland, in 1950. Following his residency in neuroanatomy, psychiatry and neurology, internal medicine and general surgery, he began his training in neurosurgery in 1953 with Professor H. Krayenbuhl at the University Hospital, Zurich.

During his undergraduate years, C.M. also achieved a number of other honors, including membership on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Basketball Coaches, Chairman of the NCAA Basketball Rules Committee, Vice President and President of USA Basketball, Chairman of the USA Basketball Games Committee, membership in the NCAA Division I Basketball Committee, Chairman of the NCAA Basketball Officiating Committee, and membership on the FIBA Central Board.

It was with this vast list of accomplishments and honors that C.M. chose to return to the University of Kentucky on April 1, 1989. C.M. hit the