

is helping keep us safe and extending freedom and peace. We are grateful for their service to our country, and for the support and sacrifice of their families.

Laura joins me in wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May the peace and goodwill of the season fill every heart and warm every home.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this message.

Message on the Observance of Hanukkah 2003 *December 19, 2003*

I send greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

During Hanukkah, people of the Jewish faith around the world mark the triumph of Jews against tyranny and oppression more than two millennia ago. With courage and unflinching faith, the Maccabees secured the Jewish people's freedom and reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. As they prepared to rededicate the Temple, there was only enough oil for one day, but the light continued to burn for eight days. Today, the lighting of the Menorah represents this ancient miracle and brings a message of hope and freedom to the Jewish people.

As families and friends share in the joyous traditions of Hanukkah, we recognize the power of faith to accomplish miracles and bring light from the darkness. We join in giving thanks for the blessings God has granted to our Nation. May the joy of Hanukkah and the peace and goodwill of the season fill our hearts and inspire us to lead lives of compassion.

Laura joins me in wishing you a blessed and Happy Hanukkah.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa 2003 *December 19, 2003*

I send greetings to those observing Kwanzaa.

Celebrated by millions across the world, Kwanzaa honors the history and heritage of Africa. This seven-day observance is an opportunity for individuals of African descent to remember the sacrifices of their ancestors and reflect on the *Nguzo Saba*. Kwanzaa's seven social and spiritual principles offer strength and guidance to meet the challenges of each new day.

During this joyous time of year, Americans renew our commitment to hope, understanding, and the great promise of our Nation. In honoring the traditions of Africa, Kwanzaa strengthens the ties that bind individuals in communities across our country and around the world.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

The President's Radio Address *December 20, 2003*

Good morning. Every year during the holidays, families across America gather to celebrate our blessings, and we unite to share those blessings with others. Particularly in this time of giving, our thoughts turn to fellow citizens who face hardship or illness or loneliness. Their burden often seems even greater at Christmastime, yet the hope of this season was meant for them as well.

The American people see these needs, and they are responding, as always, with great generosity. Just this week, a Government report found that more than 63 million Americans volunteered over the past year, about 4 million more than in the year before. On average, volunteers gave 52 hours—more than a full week of work—of their year in service to others. This increase in volunteering is evidence of the new culture of service we are building in America, especially among young people.

Nearly 2 years ago, I created the USA Freedom Corps to continue the momentum generated by the countless acts of kindness we saw after the attacks of September the 11th, 2001. I asked every person in America to commit 4,000 hours over a lifetime—or about 100 hours a year—to serving neighbors in need. The response was immediate and enthusiastic and has remained strong. Over 75,000 service organizations now work with USA Freedom Corps, and a growing percentage of Americans have answered the call to service.

Americans are volunteering in every region of the country and in nearly every part of the world. Many communities have formed Citizen Corps Councils to train neighborhoods in emergency response.

About 50,000 people are enrolled in AmeriCorps, which carries out vital work in education, the environment, and homeland security. And the Peace Corps expanded to over 7,500 volunteers in 2003, the highest level of participation in almost 3 decades.

Every time I travel in America, I have the honor to meet some of our country's most dedicated volunteers. They include people like Phuong Nguyen, a high school student in Denver who gives hours of her free time to lead service projects for the American Red Cross, and Ana Cooper of Miami, who helps senior citizens with daily needs like grocery shopping, and Bill Sellers, an 83-year-old man from Houston who has dedicated almost half his life to feeding the hungry. Some of the men and women I have met are members of the Armed Forces who volunteer time in their communities on top of their service to the Nation. And next week, I look forward to helping a generous group from Virginia distribute Angel Tree gifts to children whose parents are in prison.

America's 63 million volunteers are setting a fine example for our Nation. They are meeting essential needs in their communities, and they know the fulfillment that only comes from serving a cause greater than self. And many volunteers got started in the same way, because someone asked them.

This holiday season, I ask every American to look for a challenge in your own community and step forward to lend a hand. You can learn about thousands of service opportunities by visiting the USA Freedom Corps web site,