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WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6938 of October 11, 1996

National School Lunch Week, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

This school year, schools across the country are serving more healthful and more appealing school meals, and school-children are learning to make food choices for a nutritious diet. The National School Lunch Program, which began in 1946, is celebrating its 50th anniversary year with historic changes that will reduce diet-related diseases and improve the health outlook for America's children.

The 1996-97 school year is the first year that school meals must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans under the new School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children. This initiative, created to help schools make necessary improvements, is providing nutrition education for children and training and technical assistance for school food-service professionals. Early reports from pilot communities tell us that we are getting results. Food-service professionals are seeing children eat more fruits and vegetables. With the help of dedicated teachers, they are becoming better educated about what their bodies need.

Improvements in school meals and nutrition education enhance the health of the 50 million children in the Nation's 94,000 schools—strengthening the safety net for poor children who rely on school meals as their primary source of daily nutrition. Wholesome meals improve our children's ability to learn today and brighten their health outlook for tomorrow.

These improvements are already a reality at the local level. Team Nutrition Schools—of which there are now more than 14,000—reach 8.1 million children. These schools are community focal points for change, leading the way in bringing together teachers, parents, health professionals, local businesses, and industry leaders to promote nutrition education and to work for more healthful school meals. These schools benefit from the resources made available through an innovative network of public-private partnerships. More than 200 organizations are part of an extensive support network that dramatically increases the impact and reach of a relatively small Federal investment.

Since President Truman signed the National School Lunch Act 50 years ago, the Federal Government and local school food-service professionals have worked in partnership to meet the nutritional needs of America's children. Now, together, they are ushering in an era of historic change and continuous improvement that promise a healthier future for all Americans.

In recognition of the contributions of the National School Lunch Program to the nutritional well-being of children, the Congress, by joint resolution of October 9, 1962 (Public Law No. 87-780), has designated

the week beginning the second Sunday in October of each year as "National School Lunch Week" and has requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of that week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning October 13, 1996, as National School Lunch Week. I call upon all Americans to recognize those individuals whose efforts contribute to the success of the National School Lunch Program and to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6939 of October 11, 1996

National Children's Day, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our Nation benefits when every American child is truly valued and cherished. We have no greater responsibility or hope for our future than our children, and the promise of a better tomorrow depends upon the love, support, education, and encouragement that we give to each of them. It is up to all of us—parents and families, schools, churches, and community organizations—to join in the critical endeavor of putting the needs of our children first. Only when we reaffirm our commitment to our children's well-being can we truly say that we are prepared for the challenges that await us in the next century.

America is a country of many blessings—a rich land, a thriving democracy, a diverse and determined people. Our culture is built on faith in freedom, and opportunity, and on the spirit of community. In a Nation of such infinite promise, too many of our children face great obstacles in reaching their full potential, and it is imperative that we not turn our backs on them.

Because safety, health, a clean environment, quality education, and economic security are the keys to a brighter future, they are necessary investments in the healthy growth and development of our children. Through measures such as expanding Head Start and child care, preserving Medicaid, enhancing child protection, protecting the environment, and increasing educational opportunity for all students, my Administration has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that every child has the tools to become a productive citizen.

As we work together in a spirit of community, let us seek to instill confidence, hope, pride, and self-esteem in our young people. Because today's children are tomorrow's leaders, educators, and parents, all of us—adults and children—forever will benefit from this commitment.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Con-