

child safety messages throughout our communities. By doing so, we can save many young lives.

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

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6973 of February 24, 1997

American Red Cross Month, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Founded over a century ago by Clara Barton, the American Red Cross has evolved from a branch of the International Red Cross into a uniquely American institution, serving our Nation in peace and in war, and through countless natural disasters. Since the Spanish-American War, when the first volunteers brought emergency first-aid and news from home to wounded soldiers, generations of Americans have followed in this grand tradition of service.

Today, in communities across our Nation, a million and a half volunteers stand ready to help their neighbors at a moment's notice. Last year, Red Cross paid and volunteer staff assisted disaster victims across the country by opening more than 3,200 shelters and giving comfort to 172,000 people. The Red Cross also reached 16 million Americans through health and safety courses, including HIV and AIDS education and community outreach programs; collected more than 6 million units of lifesaving blood to keep our national blood supply ready, strong, and safe; and provided immediate counseling and support to the bereaved families of the victims of TWA Flight 800 and ValuJet Flight 592.

Overseas, American Red Cross workers provided emergency communications for our troops in Bosnia; worked with foreign Red Cross societies to rebuild the lives of civilian refugees in places such as the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda; and provided personnel, financial aid, and gifts of goods and services to the victims of international disasters and armed conflicts in every corner of the globe.

Since 1881, the size, scope, and complexity of major disasters have placed an ever-greater demand on the resources of the Red Cross. Yet, the generosity of our citizens has enabled the American Red Cross to continue to fulfill its humanitarian mission, providing assistance to those in need and easing suffering around the world. We must continue this tradition, and, in the spirit of service, support this voluntary agency because it truly belongs to all Americans. Each of us can help keep the American Red Cross strong through our donations of time, money, and blood.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America and Honorary Chairman of the American Red Cross, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws

of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 1997 as American Red Cross Month. I urge all the people of the United States to support the humanitarian work of their local Red Cross chapters by volunteering and participating in Red Cross blood drives.

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

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6974 of February 27, 1997

Irish-American Heritage Month, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Throughout the history of the United States, from the founding of our republic to the modern spread of our cultural influence around the globe, American life has been enriched continuously by the contributions of Irish Americans.

Although thousands of immigrants from Ireland had already come to America before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the largest number emigrated from their homeland in the middle of the 19th century, when devastating famine overtook their native Ireland. Many moved into our cities, where their hard work helped American industries, their political skills energized local government, and their culture added richness to urban neighborhoods. Others, freshly arrived from Cork, Kilkenny, or Belfast, kept moving all the way to the American West. Wherever they went, they added their muscle to the building of our railroads, bridges, tunnels, and canals, and they applied their minds to the shaping of American law and letters. And their values were exemplified by a firm confidence in education, a dedication to the work ethic, and a deep belief in God.

America offered these new citizens abundant opportunities and the freedom to exercise their talents in a country that was still less than 100 years old. In return, Ireland added immensely to the American national character. This month, when communities all across the Nation celebrate St. Patrick's Day, we honor the millions of Americans who trace their lineage to Ireland.

Our country has been blessed by the rich legacy of famous Americans whose ancestors emigrated to our shores from Ireland. Georgia O'Keefe, Edgar Allen Poe, and F. Scott Fitzgerald are just a few among the many whose talents have graced the arts. Andrew Mellon and Henry Ford excelled in business and finance. Will Rogers, Spencer Tracy, Bing Crosby, and John Wayne have entertained us. Pierce Butler signed the Constitution, General Douglas MacArthur led the Allied Forces in the Pacific during World War II, and Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman to sit on our Supreme Court.

But let us not forget the sacrifices, dedication, and profound achievements of the thousands of less well-known Irish Americans who have