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Week Ending Friday, October 18, 1996

Proclamation 6937—National Character Counts Week, 1996

October 11, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

One of our most important goals as a Nation is to make this a better world for all people. Millions around the globe look to America as a champion of justice, and we must always strive to encourage the good and denounce the bad.

This week, as a Nation, we celebrate the fact that "Character Counts." Whether in civic activities or in our daily lives at work and at home, we all contribute regularly to our American community and our national purpose—our sense of who we are as a people. In the end, the character of our Nation is determined by the character of our citizens.

During this special week, we recognize that character is not a quality we are born with; we must learn it. This means we must ensure that it is taught, clearly and thoughtfully, to our youth. Individual character involves honoring and embracing certain core ethical values: honesty, respect, responsibility, hard work, fairness, caring, civic virtue, and citizenship. Americans must do everything possible to create a society in which these virtues are not only taught but also acted out in daily life so that our young people can witness firsthand their value and learn right from wrong.

My Administration has made this effort a top priority. Our Improving America's Schools Act promotes initiatives in character education, just as the Goals 2000: Educate America Act recognizes the crucial role of the family in nurturing strong values and encouraging children to embrace academic achievement. Our AmeriCorps national service program offers young people a practical means through which to demonstrate their beliefs in the civic virtues that traditionally have given our Nation much of its strength of character.

The family remains, of course, the core source of our values. Parents must teach their children from the earliest age, the difference between right and wrong. But we all must do our part. Teachers, religious leaders, and other early-childhood role models must display the highest standards of respect for themselves and others; young people must commit themselves to dealing nonviolently with the inevitable problems and difficulties they will encounter; and both public- and private-sector institutions must adopt corporate behavior that encourages individual character development.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 13 through 19, 1996, as National Character Counts Week. I call upon the people of the United States, Government officials, educators, and volunteers, to observe this week with appropriate programs, 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

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:31 a.m., October 15, 1996]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 12, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on October 16.

Proclamation 6938—National School Lunch Week, 1996

October 11, 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

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