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National Family Caregivers Week, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America is the land of opportunity. But few Americans stop to think that among our greatest opportunities is a longer life span than previous generations ever would have dreamed possible.

Americans are living longer, and their lives are more productive than ever before. The number of people 65 years old or older continues to grow rapidly, and there has been an unprecedented increase in persons 85 or older. With this blessing comes the reality that advancing age can bring increased frailty and disability. Some 5.2 million people have disabilities that leave them in need of help with such daily tasks as dressing, bathing, and food preparation.

The prime source of such care for these people is their families. These loving family caregivers provide 80 to 90 percent of the medical care, household maintenance, transportation, and shopping needs of older persons. Too little recognition is given in our society to those who perform such a labor of familial love. Anyone who has personally cared for a loved one or who has witnessed such care knows that, however gratefully received, the effort is often physically and emotionally challenging.

For these reasons, it is important that all Americans have a greater awareness of and support for the vital role of family caregivers. I also ask individual Americans to think about the older people in their neighborhoods, to lend a hand when the opportunity presents itself, and to offer a friendly smile of greeting to older people. This is a wonderful way to repay the lifetime of care, kindness, and assistance that older people have already given others. It is also a fine way to discover afresh that older Americans, despite the disabilities they might have, can give everyone a great deal of love, wisdom, and friendship in return.

The Congress, by Public Law 99-477, has designated the week beginning November 24, 1986, as "National Family Caregivers Week" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning November 24, 1986, as National Family Caregivers Week. I call upon the American people, State and local governments, communities, neighbors, and other interested persons to observe this occasion with appropriate activities and ceremonies.

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

Ronald Reagan