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Mental Illness Awareness Week, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Because of the fear and ignorance of some Americans, the mentally ill often are reluctant to seek the treatments that could alleviate their physical symptoms and emotional pain. Many who are being deprived of a happy and productive future because their mental disorders go unrecognized or ignored could be helped with appropriate mental health treatment. Our Nation can no longer afford the price of the stigma against the mentally ill.

The emotional and physical price paid by the mentally ill and their families is incalculable. It is time to bring about change. We must understand that mental illnesses are real—not imaginary or self-inflicted—and that some are caused by biochemical or brain dysfunctions that require medical attention in addition to supportive services.

We must also become more aware that appropriate treatment can lift depression, ameliorate hallucinations and delusions, relieve panic and anxiety, and overcome dysfunctional behavior and thinking patterns. We must also realize that treatment of mental illness restores productivity to the treated, reduces their use of other health services, and increases their social independence.

Research has prompted unparalleled growth in scientific knowledge about mental illness. New technologies have permitted study of the living brain and elucidated its linkages to normal and abnormal behaviors. Such research has profound implications for all of us because it offers hope for those with the most devastating and resistant disorders and because it provides clues to the bases of human behavior.

In recognition of the urgent need to educate the American public about mental illnesses and their treatments, the Congress, by Public Law 99-404, has designated the week of October 5 through October 11, 1986, as "Mental Illness Awareness 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 of October 5 through October 11, 1986, as Mental Illness Awareness Week. I call upon all people of the United States to observe such week with ceremonies and activities designed to exchange fear of mental illness for knowledge of its causes and treatments and to replace stigma against the mentally ill with understanding of their needs and suffering.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of October, 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