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(Parvin)
March 16, 1982
9:30 a.m.

MRS. REAGAN: LEAGUE OF REPUBLICAN WOMEN OF D.C.
MARCH 19, 1982

- Thank you for that warm Republican welcome and for inviting me to your luncheon. You know many people think that being a First Lady must change your life completely. It doesn't really. As I was coming here today -- motorcade, flashing lights and all -- I realized I was thinking the very same thing I used to think when I had one small child with another on the way -- gosh it's nice to get out of the house.
- So thanks for getting me out of the house. And a special thanks for the funds you've raised today to help the fight against drug abuse. The National Federation of Parents for Drug Free Youth can put the money to excellent use. This is an organization that believes the family is the basic, essential unit for helping kids over the drug hurdle.
- I don't want to give the impression that I frequently quote Russian novelists. But someone pointed out to me the other day a quote by Tolstoy that struck me as especially sad. He wrote, "All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Well, increasingly, unhappy families are unhappy because of drug use by their children. Today, there are millions of confused, heartsick families in this Nation and drugs are

the reason for their misery. Drugs destroy the very bonds that hold a family together.

-- I've been doing some traveling and in the process talking to many parents. I wish I could tell you all the accounts I have heard -- stories of families where lying replaces trust and hate replaces harmony. Stories of children stealing money from their mothers' purses. Stories of parents not knowing about drugs, then not believing their children were on them, and finally not understanding that help was available.

-- A few weeks ago I spoke to a PTA Conference. I told them the true story of a 16-year-old high school boy who had been using marijuana for a year. On Friday afternoon before he was to stay overnight at a friend's house, he began smoking pot heavily. By that evening he was picking fights with his friends and exhibiting paranoia, which I'm told is a symptom of heavy pot use. After leaving his friend's house, the boy was picked up by the police who took him to the emergency room. When the family arrived at the hospital, the psychiatrist asked them if their boy used drugs. They said, "No, he doesn't use drugs, he just smokes a little pot."

-- Through education we can make sure other parents do not make the mistake of that boy's parents. By working with community parent groups we can prevent children from getting

into drugs, as well as helping kids get off them. There currently are about 3,000 of these groups in America devoted to stopping drug abuse among our young.

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