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Mrs. Reagan's Remarks
CHEMICAL PEOPLE II
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Thursday, September 25, 1986

-- First of all, I want to thank you for inviting me here today. I've looked forward to it very much because it represents a new beginning as we embark on a second phase of the CHEMICAL PEOPLE Project.

-- It's only been three years since caring individuals across America joined with Public Television to try to combat the frightening spread of drugs among our young people. And look what we've accomplished in that short period of time. We've brought people together in 8,000 communities to find solutions to the problems where they live. We've convinced society that chemical abuse permeates every level. Today, thanks to you, the tide of opinion is turning, the wall of denial is crumbling.

-- A few years ago, it was unfashionable to attack the drug problem, but now the movement grows daily. I certainly have seen more about drug abuse in the papers and on television. More well-known people are coming forward and talking about their addiction. You've made a real impact.

-- In addition, what we've learned in the process has challenged us to re-focus our vision. We have discovered that drug abuse is often related to a host of other problems facing teenagers, and that they all stem from a common root of self doubt and despair. It may seem strange but we need to give our children hope that life is worth living -- a sense that it's alright to take pride

in doing well and doing right. Each needs to know that exploring one's own talents is more satisfying than the false promise of escape through magic potions, secret thrills, truancy or suicide. Developing self-worth and sound family values are a great part of the answer.

-- The answers that we've seen in Generation At Risk all seek to reverse those feelings of hopelessness, to reconnect young people with themselves and their families. They are assured that they are capable and worthwhile individuals.

-- And the innovative programs cited are just a few of the many wonderful initiatives that the CHEMICAL PEOPLE task forces have generated around the country. Not every program can work in every community. Each community needs to analyze its own needs and design its own approach. I congratulate you for the energy and determination that you have brought to the project so far. But more is required to fight school-age drug abuse, school drop-out, teenage pregnancy, suicide and crime. It is our moral responsibility to do more than simply recognize these problems. Each and every citizen has an obligation to take a personal stand against drug abuse and the related problems.

-- Any accomplishment begins with a dream. There must be a vision of what might be, before it can be. But it also takes actually doing it. We have to work hard every day ourselves,

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even if there are setbacks and frustrations along the way. Our dream is to create an environment that is free of a hazard that is destroying far too many lives. It takes many months or even years, and a lot of perseverance to realize any dream of such scope. But every little taste of success feeds our determination.

-- Every time a fellow man, woman or child gets hooked on drugs and alcohol, it makes each of us a little bit smaller; it steals something precious from our lives. And every time even one person kicks the habit, learns a sense of self-worth, and begins to contribute to society each of us can share in the joy.

-- I hope that this second effort will bring you new ideas and new hope that will re-ignite your determination. The future of these kids rests with us and with them. Let's do our part to help them do theirs. And maybe one day, we can all share in the joy of a drug-free world.

-- Thank you and God bless you.

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