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**Collection:** Speechwriting, White House Office  
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**Folder Title:** Nancy Reagan: Volunteers of  
America Luncheon. May 12, 1987

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REMARKS FOR VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA LUNCHEON  
TUESDAY, MAY 12, 1987

-- THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR INVITING ME TO BE WITH YOU TODAY.  
AND THANK YOU FOR HONORING ME WITH THIS SPECIAL AWARD. I FEEL  
PRIVILEGED TO HAVE BEEN SELECTED FOR THIS HONOR, AND HOPE THAT I  
WILL BE ABLE TO LIVE UP TO WHAT BALLINGTON AND MAUD BOOTH WOULD  
EXPECT OF ME. THEY GAVE SO GENEROUSLY OF THEMSELVES AND WE  
SHOULD ALL STRIVE TO EMULATE THEM IN OUR OWN WAY.

-- I'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT THE NATURE OF GIVING DURING THE  
PAST SEVERAL YEARS. I SAW, FIRST HAND, THOUSANDS OF VOLUNTEERS

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GIVING THEIR ENERGIES TO HELP THOSE WHO LOST THEIR HOMES AND  
FAMILIES DURING THE TERRIBLE EARTHQUAKE IN MEXICO CITY.

-- I'VE VISITED DRUG TREATMENT CENTERS WHERE CHILDREN ARE  
LEARNING TO GIVE OF THEMSELVES ONCE AGAIN, AFTER DRUGS HAD TAKEN  
THEIR PERSONALITIES, THEIR HEALTH, THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR SELF-  
RESPECT. AND I'VE SEEN PARENTS, SCHOOLS, CORPORATIONS, THE  
CLERGY, AND THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY COME TOGETHER TO GIVE OF THEM-  
SELVES TO FIGHT THIS PROBLEM.

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-- THERE IS A DEEP CURRENT OF GOODNESS AND GIVING IN AMERICA. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO DO WHAT I CAN TO HELP THAT CURRENT FLOW WHERE IT CAN BE MOST USEFUL. I THINK WE MUST DO ALL WE CAN TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN FROM THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE.

-- I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU A FEW WORDS ON THAT SUBJECT. I WISH I COULD TELL YOU ALL THE ACCOUNTS I'VE HEARD -- STORIES OF PAIN AND HURT SO RAW THEY BRING TEARS TO YOUR EYES. NOT ONLY ARE THE CHILDREN SUFFERING, BUT THE PARENTS FEEL ANGUISH

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AND DESPERATION AS WELL. ONE MOTHER WROTE TO ME PLEADING, "I'M BEGGING FOR YOU TO HELP ME SAVE MY SON." HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO SUCH A HEART-WRENCHING PLEA? YET FOR ALL THE STORIES OF HEARTACHE I HEAR, I ALSO FIND MORE AND MORE INSTANCES OF SUCCESS OVER DRUGS.

-- I WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT ONE OF THOSE INSTANCES -- A STORY OF GIVING AND THE MOBILITY OF A MOTHER'S LOVE. I ONCE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM A MOTHER WHO Poured OUT THE PAIN OF HER SON'S DRUG

PROBLEM. SHE STOOD BY HIM TIME AND TIME AGAIN, BECAUSE SHE KNEW THAT DEEP DOWN THE KID WHO KEPT ENDING UP IN JAIL WASN'T REALLY HER SON, BUT SOME INCARNATION OF THE SON SHE ONCE KNEW. SHE SUFFERED A TERRIBLE AUTO ACCIDENT SPENDING MONTHS IN THE HOSPITAL, AND WHEN HER SON CAME TO VISIT HER HE WAS STONED. SHE EVEN HAD TO BEG THE DOCTOR TO RELEASE HER FROM THE HOSPITAL EARLY SO SHE COULD GET HER SON OUT OF JAIL. HE WAS ARRESTED ONCE MORE, AND USING A WALKER BECAUSE OF THE CAST ON HER BODY, SHE AGAIN WENT TO FREE HER SON

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FROM JAIL, FOR SHE WANTED TO SAVE HIM MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

-- THE MOTHER'S SACRIFICES FINALLY WELLED UP IN THE BOY AND HE SAID TO HER, "MOM, YOU STILL LOVE ME AFTER ALL I'VE DONE TO HURT YOU DON'T YOU?" SHE SAID THAT WAS THE TURNING POINT. ALL OF US INVOLVED IN THE DRUG ABUSE PROBLEM ARE LOOKING FOR THE TURNING POINT -- THE POINT WHERE WE CAN GET THE KIDS WHO ARE ON DRUGS OFF THEM, THE POINT WHERE WE CAN PREVENT OTHER CHILDREN FROM USING THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE.

-- THE TURNING OF A CHILD AGAINST DRUGS REQUIRES GIVING.

IT MAY BE THE GIVING OF A PARENT, A FRIEND, A MINISTER OR A "VOA" COUNSELLOR, BUT GIVING OF ONESELF IS THE KEY. AND I KNOW THIS IS A CONCEPT THAT NEEDS NO EXPLANATION TO THE "VOA."

-- ANOTHER THING WE MUST GIVE TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO DRUG USE. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE FOR THEM CONSTRUCTIVE OUTLETS FOR THEIR YOUTHFUL ENERGY. I'M VERY IMPRESSED WITH YOUR MIDAS TOUCH PROGRAM AND I'M CONFIDENT THAT YOU ARE SAVING

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COUNTLESS YOUNG PEOPLE FROM TURNING TO DRUGS. YOU ARE GIVING THEM HOPE FOR THE FUTURE, AND THE NECESSARY TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND THEY, TOO, CAN BE SUCCESSFUL.

-- I KNOW "VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA" UNDERSTANDS WHAT I'VE BEEN SPEAKING OF TODAY. SOMEONE SAID THAT WE MUST NOT ONLY GIVE WHAT WE HAVE, WE MUST GIVE WHAT WE ARE. WELL, IN COUNTLESS WAYS EVERY DAY THE VOA GIVES OF ITSELF. IT GIVES FAITH, LOVE, AND A HELPING HAND TO THOSE WHO ARE REACHING OUT. I'M HONORED TO BE HERE TODAY

AND I AM DEEPLY HONORED TO RECEIVE THE BALLINGTON AND MAUD BOOTH  
AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO HUMANITY. THANK YOU AND GOD  
BLESS YOU FOR ALL YOU'RE DOING.

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