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MRS. REAGAN'S REMARKS
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF SHOPPING CENTERS DINNER
WASHINGTON, D.C.
TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 1988

-- THANK YOU, MEL, FOR THIS AWARD. AND THANK ALL OF YOU FOR THIS CHECK -- I ASSURE YOU THAT IT WILL BE PUT TO VERY GOOD, VERY IMPORTANT USE.

-- SOMEONE ASKED ME THE OTHER DAY WHY I'M COMMITTED TO THIS DRUG CENTER WHICH BEARS MY NAME AND WHICH YOU'VE RECOGNIZED WITH YOUR GENEROSITY.

-- LET ME ANSWER IT THIS WAY. I RECEIVED 86,000 LETTERS LAST YEAR -- THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THEM ABOUT DRUGS. AND I WAS THINKING I PROBABLY GET THE SADDEST MAIL OF ANYONE IN AMERICA. BECAUSE PEOPLE IN PAIN OFTEN NEED TO WRITE WHAT THEY'RE FEELING; IT SOMEHOW HELPS TO EASE THEIR HURT. AND THERE'S A GREAT DEAL OF PAIN ASSOCIATED WITH DRUGS.

-- I GET LETTERS FROM THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THOSE WHO'VE BEEN KILLED OR EMOTIONALLY DESTROYED BY DRUGS. I GET LETTERS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE ADDICTED TO DRUGS WHO ARE STRUGGLING DESPERATELY TO GET FREE.

-- A YOUNG MAN NAMED RAY WROTE ME SAYING HE FELT VERY LOST AND LONELY. HE WAS IN JAIL. HE SAID HE DIDN'T BELONG THERE AND WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN THERE, BUT HE TRIED A DRUG CALLED COCAINE. AND ALTHOUGH HE'D ONCE LIVED A HAPPY LIFE WITH LOVING PARENTS AND GOOD FRIENDS, NOW HE'S LOST EVERYTHING. DRUGS TOOK EVERYTHING -- HIS DIGNITY, HIS HONOR, HIS SELF-RESPECT. HE SAID THAT WITHOUT THESE THINGS YOU COULDN'T REALLY BE A PERSON AND THEN HE SAID:

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-- "MRS. REAGAN...WHY DID (THIS) HAPPEN TO ME? I HURT SO BAD AND AM SO SORRY FOR THE COURSE MY LIFE HAS TAKEN. SOME SAY I'M SICK. SOME SAY I'M BAD. I DON'T KNOW, ALL I KNOW IS THAT I HURT DEEP WITHIN ME, AND I PRAY IT GOES AWAY. PLEASE TAKE IT AWAY, MRS. REAGAN. IF NOT FOR ME FOR OTHERS. HELP US. WE MUST LET PEOPLE KNOW THE DANGER . . . ANYONE WHO TRIES A DRUG TAKES THE GREATEST RISK HE WILL EVER TAKE IN HIS LIFE. MRS. REAGAN, PLEASE, TELL THEM FOR ME. I'M JUST LIKE THEM. I AM THEM. IF I TOLD MY STORY OF PAIN AND MISERY, I KNOW NOT ONE PERSON WOULD TAKE A DRUG IF THEY HAD TO LOSE WHAT I'VE LOST."

-- HOW CAN ANYONE IGNORE SUCH A PLEA OR THE THOUSANDS OF OTHER PLEAS I RECEIVE? THAT'S WHY THIS CENTER MEANS SO MUCH TO ME . . . IT'S MY WAY OF ANSWERING THOSE CRIES FOR HELP ONCE MY HUSBAND AND I LEAVE THE WHITE HOUSE.

-- RAY WROTE TO ME, BUT IN A SENSE HE ALSO WROTE TO ALL OF YOU HERE, AS WELL. AND HE WAS ASKING FOR HELP, NOT JUST FOR HIMSELF, BUT FOR OTHERS WHO AREN'T YET SUFFERING THE WAY HE SUFFERS.

-- LAST YEAR YOU RESPONDED TO SUCH CRIES WITH YOUR "KIDS SAY KNOW" CAMPAIGN. YOUR "KIDS KNOW" CAMPAIGN IS SET FOR LATER THIS MONTH. YOUNG PEOPLE LOVE SHOPPING CENTERS AND MALLS, AND YOUR EDUCATION PROGRAMS ARE AN EXCELLENT WAY TO SHOW YOU CARE IN RETURN. YOU'VE PROVIDED LEADERSHIP THAT GENUINELY IS A COMMUNITY SERVICE. I CONGRATULATE YOU AND URGE YOU TO CONTINUE YOUR COMMITMENT.

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-- IN CLOSING, LET ME THANK YOU AGAIN FOR THIS AWARD AND
FOR ALL YOU'RE DOING TO HELP THIS COUNTRY FIGHT THE DESTRUCTION
OF DRUGS. I AM DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE.

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