11-21-1986

United Way Speech

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Ladies and gentlemen, it is truly a pleasure to address a room full of people who willingly volunteer their time and talents to help improve the lives of the less fortunate members of our community.

I commend and congratulate you for your selfless efforts to raise funds for the half-million Pinellas residents who must utilize the services of the 41 agencies that receive support from the United Way.

As the 1986 campaign comes to a close, let us reflect for a moment on the victories that you have achieved:

* More volunteers than ever before joined forces to carry out this campaign.
* The level of funding that you raised, exceeds the totals achieved in all previous campaigns.
* Many of you have reported dramatic increases, some reaching as high as 300%, in your corporate and employee campaigns.
* And the concept of Networking, which was introduced this year to include small businesses in this effort, has resulted in an all-new source of dollars and support for the United Way.

Each of you has demonstrated outstanding leadership in your role as a United Way volunteer.

The 41 agencies receiving United Way support certainly owe their gratitude to you and to the many other people who have supported this campaign. Your work over the last few months will in some way touch the lives of all of us who live in Pinellas County, from Adoption and Foster Care, Day Care, Health and Home Care, to services
for Senior Citizens and the Disabled, Counseling and Mental Health; from Emergency Food and Shelter and the Crisis Hotline, to Child, Drug, Alcohol, Spouse and Sexual Abuses. The United Way also funds Employment and Volunteer Recruitment as well as Youth and Personal Development. The United Way certainly helps to enhance and improve the quality of life for all of us in this county.

Since the fall of 1933, when the forerunner of the United Way was incorporated in St. Petersburg, there have been many campaigns and victories. During that Depression year the goal was set at $32,948 and despite the economic times, $23,513 was raised.

When the Clearwater United Community Fund held its first campaign in 1941, its goal of $15,000 was exceeded by $899. The Dunedin initial drive was in 1945. It raised $1,259.

In 1966, the United Fund of Pinellas County was born and in 1971, it became the United Way of Pinellas County. Since that time this institution has gone forward to break new ground with each campaign, raising millions of dollars and increasing the number of agencies supported.

The heart-felt thanks of this county for this glorious history belongs to you volunteers.

As we look ahead to 1987, we will find that excitement and challenge lies in store. The coming year will mark the 100th anniversary of the United Way of America, and plans are already underway for the entire nation to join in the Centennial celebration. I would like to share a few of those plans with you today:

President and Mrs. Reagan will serve as the chairpersons of the national Centennial celebration. The kick-off festivities for this grand event will take place at the 1987 Tournament of Roses Parade. This special presentation will salute America's volunteers through floats commemorating the United Way and a performance by a 360-piece Centennial Band comprised of college and university musicians from across the
country. The holidays are a busy time for us all, but this will surely be a program that you will not want to miss.

Another televised event to which to look forward is the half-time activities of the upcoming Super Bowl. These activities will be dedicated to saluting the Volunteers of America.

Our government will promote the celebration as well, when the Post Office issues a 1987 stamp in honor of the United Way Centennial.

Myriad activities will also take place in Pinellas and other communities throughout our nation to promote the critical programs of the United Way and to support the efforts of dedicated volunteers like those of you who have worked tirelessly throughout this campaign.

Not many social institutions in this country have stood the test of time as the United Way has. For nearly a century, in thousands of communities large and small, United Ways have brought people together to address changing social needs and build caring communities.

Finally, in closing let me make one additional observation and leave one thought with you. The observation is contained in the United Way logo type -- **Love Finds a Way**. What a beautiful and applicable maxim! I am reminded by two simple lines from *The Prophet* written by Kahil Gibran, the great middle eastern writer, poet, philosopher:

"You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is only when you give of yourself that you truly give..."

Surely, the sharing of your resources and your possessions is important. The giving of yourself — your love and understanding, your compassion and sense of rightness, your concern and caring, your reliability and just "being there" show a magnitude of strength which achieves that Higher Order. These human interactions are not quantifiable into evaluative entities.
And yes, victors have their rewards. In your case, it is not only a sense of satisfaction of a race well run, but that which occurs beyond the finish line: an attempt at the elimination of affliction and agony and pain, and abuses of all sorts, an end of depression and discouragement and discrimination, a control of diseases and various illnesses, the return of one's pride and dignity and self-respect and so many more prizes.

I mentioned earlier that I will leave you with a final thought. I do believe that nothing is as humanly devastating and with such prolonged consequences as abject hopelessness. You in your individual spheres, you in the United Way, will bring hope to so many people today. On the one hand you give this special gift of hope and on the other hand the hope you give is your own reward.

How can they -- how can we -- thank you!

But then, who can tie a ribbon around the rainbow

Who can embrace the sunbeam

or reach and touch a star

Who can pin down a piece of cloud

Or write a note upon the wind!

But we can say "Thank you." For the thousands of men and women and boys and girls who will be direct recipients in this county, let me say for all of them THANK YOU -- The United Way!