



PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
AT HIPPY EVENT

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you so much, Nan. And thank all of you for gathering for this reception that brings together people from all over the country, and indeed, the world, to celebrate the successes of HIPPY and to point toward the future.

As Nan just said, I discovered HIPPY totally by accident, by reading an article about the program in the Miami newspaper. But there was something about that description which captured me from the very moment I saw it, because what it said was that this was a program aimed at a parent, primarily a mother, become her child's first teacher by emphasizing, through a structured learning program, ways that children and parents could work together and in their own ways and competence, and grow.

And as we heard so eloquently described by Doris, the story that she tells is a story that we hear over and over, and over again, around the country and the world. The person who I saw in that picture, that I finally tracked down by calling all over the world until I finally found her at Hebrew University in Israel, was Dr. Avema Lombard (phonetic), the founder of HIPPY. And she is here, and I'd like her to join us and be recognized.

Now if you think it's been hard for Washington, D.C. to understand Arkansas, you can imagine what it was like when I got Dr. Lombard on the telephone and told her I was married to the governor of a place called Arkansas, and that I was interested in this program that had been started in Israel, and that I wanted to know how to get it started in Arkansas. And I just credit Dr. Lombard with immense faith, because after some very long conversations -- what Nan described as sitting around our dining room table -- led to our being able to implement the program in our state and to help in some small way with its spread around the country.

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That would not have been possible without the National Council of Jewish Women, which played a central role in both the creation of HIPPIY originally at Hebrew University through the funding of the work and research, and also by housing HIPPIY, and enabling it to develop its own legs. And I want to thank all of the representatives from NCJW who are here as well.

But then in order for HIPPIY to have a life of its own, it became very important that it have a staff that understood how it needed to be implemented and carefully expanded around the country. And I think we are all very lucky that the young woman who was chosen to direct HIPPIY has stayed with it, and in effect has mothered it along, and that's Miriam Westheimer (phonetic), who has done a wonderful job.

And I want to thank one other institution that is about to take over a major role in the life and expansion in the life of HIPPIY, and that is Teachers' College at Columbia University, which will house HIPPIY. I think it's a very important step in HIPPIY's development.

I'm also grateful for the members of congress who have supported HIPPIY. And I would particularly like to thank Senators Glenn and Pell for being here, and my good friend, Rosa, for their commitment to the concept of HIPPIY and to their understanding of what it means in the lives of children and families.

I'm grateful that the Department of Education through Gov. Kunin (phonetic) and Secretary Reley (phonetic) are both here. Because what the Clinton administration is trying to do is to encourage the sort of grass roots programs, like HIPPIY, that actually work, that work with people where they live, that give them the skills and support they need so they are able to provide their children with the kind of beginning effort that every child needs to have in order to be successful in school, and, as Doris points out, in life.

We have a lot of hope for what we are achieving in this administration. We are particularly gratified by the extraordinary progress we have already made in creating new legislation that the congress has passed that will enable us to be more focused on our goals for education and on what we need to do to provide assistance at the classroom and school

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level.

But as Sen. Glenn says so eloquently, we also know that parents and families are where education starts. And we know that until we give the sort of support to families, particularly families under stress, we cannot, no matter how much we reform our schools, expect to have the positive results to the extent we would like to see them.

So I'm hoping that the congress, and state legislatures, and school districts, and nonprofits, and universities all around the country will take up the challenge of HIPPY and will work to make this program available to even more parents and children. It is one of the great gifts that we could give.

It is also one of the surest ways we have to making it possible for more mothers like Doris to stand before us and, with new confidence and new skills, talk as every mother wants to talk, with pride about her children and their accomplishments. That's what HIPPY is all about.

Thank you.

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