

White House Conference on

Teenagers

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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE FIRST LADY
AT THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON TEENAGERS:
RAISING RESPONSIBLE AND RESOURCEFUL YOUTH

The East Room

10:45 A.M. EDT

MRS. CLINTON: Good morning, and please be seated, and welcome to the White House. We have been looking forward to this conference for nearly a year now as we have talked with and explored all the ways that we can raise resourceful and responsible young people. And many people have asked me why a conference on teenagers. Why make teenagers the focus of a fully day's discussion at the White House.

Well, I think that as we just saw in the video -- and I want to thank and applaud the families that participated in that video -- many of us are concerned about what we can do as parents and as citizens, as employers or educators, as public officials or community leaders, to give more support to teenagers and their families.

The President and I speak, of course, with great authority -- (laughter) -- having just graduated from being the parents of a teenager to being the parents of a 20-year-old and having survived it. But, believe me, this conference is more than just a trip down memory lane or an exercise in nostalgia for us. We believe strongly that our young people deserve our very best efforts.

I want to thank many of the people who are here today who have been part of putting this conference together, but more than that, for the work that they have done over so many decades. First, let me thank David and Betty Hamburg who are here. (Applause.) David and Betty, in many ways, inspired this conference.

I began working with them more than 20 years ago now, and I can think of no people who are more dedicated to helping all young people, whether they're in the forgotten or not forgotten half, whether they are going through great transitions or turning points in their lives. And I think many of us in this room owe both David and Betty a great deal of gratitude. I would like to ask them to stand so we could thank them both. (Applause.)

Also with us today is Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones and Secretary Donna Shalala, Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder, Secretary Alexis Herman, National Service Corps CEO Harris Wofford, the Director of Personnel Management Janis LaChance, the Deputy Drug Czar Vereen, Annie E. Casey Foundation, the W.T. Grant Foundation and the YMCA of the USA are all sponsors and supporters of this conference.

Now, all of us are here because we believe there is no group of Americans more full of promise or potential. But we also believe there is no group of Americans more in need of the support, guidance and committed efforts of all of us than today's teenagers.

Ask any teen -- and I do -- I've been privileged to speak to so many in sort of personal and informal ways and in more formal settings. Just last week at a high school town hall in Watkins Glen, New York, where the teens lined up and asked all kinds of questions. If you ask teens and you listen to teens, you can hear, directly and indirectly, their voices telling us that growing up today feels tougher than ever before. I happen to think that's right. I think it's harder being a teen today than it was, certainly, when I was one so many years ago.

But I also think that the wonder and hope and exciting choices that teenagers face in their lives are too often becoming times of great stress, alienation, and confusion. And that, too, has always been part of the teen experience, but the environment and context in which that occurs is more dangerous than ever before.

And if it's tough to be a teenager today, it's probably even tougher to be a parent. More and more parents are working outside our homes; they're struggling to do right by their families and their jobs. And I have met so many mothers and fathers who tell me that they just feel inadequate and anxious about navigating those teenage years -- more so than they certainly felt when their kids were younger.

We're all worried about the choices our teenagers make, about how the best-laid plans for a bright future can disintegrate with a single bad decision to drink, to try drugs, to drive too fast, to trust the wrong person. Parents are worried about the movies their children are seeing, the web sites they're visiting, the music they're listening to. And there's a lot of worry that all those heart-to-heart talks and those efforts to communicate, which are sometimes so awkward and difficult, about values and good behavior are getting drowned out by a popular culture filled with gratuitous sex and violence.

In our two panels this morning, and in the breakout sessions this afternoon, we will tackle the challenges facing today's teenagers and their parents. But it won't just be a session for everyone to share their worries. More importantly, we're going to be highlighting some of the latest research about teen years and the innovative ways that Americans can work together to ensure that every teenager has a safe passage to adulthood.

Three years ago, in this room, we held the first White House Conference on Early Learning and Childhood Development. We sought to raise awareness about the critical growth that takes place in the brain during the first three years of life, and to explore the implications of this knowledge on parenting, education and child care. In many ways, that conference and

today's conference can be viewed as bookends, because now we're beginning to learn that the brain goes through yet another, and equally critical, growth spurt during the early teenage years. Though the research is still preliminary, scientists now believe that this is the time when all the hard-wiring of the brain takes place, when a teenager's intellectual, emotional and physical capacities are developed for a lifetime.

Now, I remember the very wise advice I got from a friend of mine, when my daughter was very small and she was raising three teenagers. And she said, you know, the two times in a child's life that seem most similar to me are those toddler years and the teenage years. It's when we need to give so much more attention to our children. And now, we didn't know, back when I heard this advice about 19 or so years ago, that there would be brain research to support that anecdotal experience that parents had. But I remembered that so often during the times when our own daughter was growing up -- that even if your teenager or your preteen doesn't want you following her or him around, in many ways -- think of that toddler metaphor -- they need you around. And it's hard for a lot of parents to figure out exactly how to do that.

This research has, therefore, important implications for parents, because teenagers need the guidance and support of their parents more than ever. It is still difficult for many of us to remember that teenagers want our attention. After all, this is the time when the real or the imaginary "keep out" signs start appearing on closed bedroom doors, when many of our children would rather spend two hours talking to a friend on the phone than 10 minutes talking to their mother or father in person. But what we are learning is that for all their declarations of independence, America's teenagers still want and need the everyday love, involvement and discipline of their parents.

Today, we are releasing a new poll, commissioned by the YMCA, which found that parents are still the most important adults in their teenagers' lives. More than three out of four teens say they still turn to their parents in times of trouble. In fact, while parents -- and this is so interesting -- while parents list the threat of drugs and alcohol as their top concerns about their teens, teens, themselves, list education and "not having enough time" with their parents as their top concern.

So it's time that we respond to these concerns, and many of us have been struggling with ways to do that. I believe one of the biggest casualties of modern life has been family time, especially time during meals, when parents and children can check out of their busy schedules and check in with each other. Before our daughter left for college, the three of us made it a priority to share at least one meal together a day.

With our hectic schedules, it wasn't always easily and, occasionally, wasn't possible. But we sure tried. And when we were able to, that hour or half-hour in the small kitchen of the private quarters upstairs in the White House was truly my favorite part of the day, because Bill and I were very convinced that we wanted to convey to our daughter a simple message, one that we hoped she would carry away to college: that whenever she does need someone to talk to or ask for advice, or just wants to say hello, we will be available and eager to listen.

I also know, though, the experience of hanging around, waiting for a sighting. (Laughter.) You know, when we were first in Washington, in the first term, a lot of people -- some of the pundits and others -- would say, well, the Clintons don't go out, they don't socialize enough, you know, why aren't they going to Camp David enough. And those are people who had forgotten or never had a teenager. And when you have one in your home, you want to hang around with the hope that just maybe they'll deign to say something to you. Occasionally, that works, but not always. And we hope this conference will inspire even more parents to stay involved in their teenagers' lives and to open new lines of communication.

I'm very pleased to announce the National Partnership for Women and Families, along with the Families and Work Institute, will lead a new campaign to promote the importance of spending time with your teenagers.

Now, there are some lessons we parents have to learn about this. That is not the time when you unload every piece of worldly advice you have stored up for your entire lifetime, it is not the time when you lecture and fill up the space with all the words that you want to fill. These are things that I've learned from experience.

It is, instead, a time when you hopefully are there to inspire the communication that is two-way and principally coming from your teen. The Time With Teens campaign will challenge parents to take stock of their own lives and work habits and look for ways to make more time for their children.

It will challenge businesses to offer more flexible work schedules and policies for parents, and it will challenge churches and synagogues, and mosques and schools, and health care agencies and all community organizations to create more opportunities for families to spend time together.

But we have to do more than just raise awareness among parents. We have to give parents the tools we all need to stay involved in our children's lives. That's why we're also launching a new White House Task Force on Navigating the New Media Age. Comprised of members from both the public and private sectors, this task force will find ways to transform the tools of the media age, namely the Internet, into tools for parents. The task force will develop two new Internet portals -- one that will link parents to information and advice on raising teens, from health and safety to child care and education, and a second to link teens to a variety of age-appropriate resources on the Internet.

We also recognize it is more difficult for parents to keep track of what teens are watching and learning on TV or on their home computer. The YMCA poll you'll hear about found that six out of 10 teenagers are watching television without parental supervision, while 45 percent of all teens say they surf the Internet on their own.

You know, when we only had one TV in the home, and you had to fight with your parents and your brothers and sisters to figure out which one of the three stations you were going to watch, it was a lot easier for parents to supervise what their children were watching. Now we have so many opportunities for kids to see things without any parental supervision, or even

without an older brother or sister around saying, that's stupid, or how dumb that is, trying to interject some reality into the world that the media conveys to our kids.

We also know that the V-chip is now in effect, and I strongly urge parents -- particularly of young kids, but also of teenagers -- to learn how to program that V-chip and to use it.

There are several media rating systems in place to help parents determine the appropriateness of the shows their children watch. But with so many different systems, parents must hunt for the information needed to decode these various ratings. That's why we will ask the task force to work with the entertainment and media industries to create a single web site to help parents make sense of all the various rating systems, and use them to monitor their children's interactions with the media. I hope eventually, we will get to a uniform system of ratings, so that what is used on the video shows, is used on the movies, is used on the TV, is used across the board.

This is only a temporary step, the web site. But I renew, therefore, my challenge to the entertainment industry. Let's create a voluntary, uniform rating system so that all parents can better decide what's appropriate and what is not appropriate for their children to see.

The challenges before us are great, and the time between childhood and adulthood, as Bill and I can attest, is all too short. But if there is one message we hope all Americans will take away from this conference, it is that each of us has the power to make a difference in every teenager's life. And it is not just a task for parents. The research and our own experience shows that oftentimes, it is a teacher or a coach, a minister or an employer, a neighbor or another relative who can provide the mentoring and the stability that every young person needs. And sometimes during a rocky period in a teen's life, it may be somebody outside of a parent who can be turned to with good advice and suggestions.

So it is not just a conference aimed at teens and their parents, it's really a conference for our entire country; to be committed; to make what is biologically a disorienting time for our teens and a time of exploration, a confusing time -- to make it more of an opportunity and a real journey to self-discovery; to take a time of peril and turn it into a time of promise.

We have a lot of experts and, certainly, we have teens and parents, as well -- we're going to be talking about what has worked for them. And it will be a challenge to us. But when I speak to groups of teenagers, I always start by telling them how proud I am of the way that they are coping with their lives, because the great, vast majority of our kids are good kids.

That is not the message that we often receive on the media, where we only see the stereotypes and the negative depictions. And a lot of these kids are doing the very best they can. In fact, the flip side of our concern is that some of them take their lives so seriously and strive for such perfection that the teen years are a time of even heightened misery and anxiety because they don't think they're measuring up.

So we have got to do a better job in sending a message to our kids that we value them, we love them, we care about them, and that's why we want to be as involved in their lives as

possible. So let me now introduce my co-parent -- (laughter) -- and someone who has been deeply committed to the young people of our country, the President of the United States. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Thank you and good morning. I want to join with Hillary in welcoming you to the White House, and thanking all of you for coming. I thank the foundations that have helped us. And thank you, David Hamburg. I still remember when we worked on a report about the developmental needs of young adolescents back in the late '80s, in which we recommended, among other things, that there ought to be community service in all of our schools -- something that we're finally getting around to.

I thank all of those who are here. I see so many people out here in this audience who have done so much to help our young people, our teenagers, live better lives. I see one of the founders of the City Year program in Boston. I see a man who has adopted a huge number of children, along with his wife, and personally made sure that they got through their teenage years. There are many, many stories here. I'm grateful to all of you.

I'm very grateful to Secretary Shalala and Secretary Herman, and our National Service Chairman, Senator Harris Wofford; and Deputy Attorney General Holder, and Janice LaChance, and all the others who are here from the administration -- the Deputy Director of our Drug Office, Donald Vereen. And thank you, Representative Stephanie Tubbs Jones. I thank you all for what you are doing.

I want to thank the panelists, and those who will come on afterward. And I think we ought to give one more hand to the families that were in the film, that walked in with Hillary and me. They did a great job. (Applause.)

You know, we've worked very hard on these family issues for a long time, and Hillary has done so for 30 years. But the way I see this as President, as well as a parent, looking ahead to the kind of America we're trying to build in the new century -- when I became President, we had to worry about whether everybody who wanted or needed a job could get one. And that was very important. And the dignity of work is very important to families. It helps to define the shape of family life in ways that are by and large positive.

I'll never forget once when I was governor, I had a panel of former welfare recipients that were in the work force, and one of my colleagues asked the lady from my state, said, well, what's the best thing about having a job. And she said, the best thing about it is when my boy goes to school and they say, what does your mama do for a living, he can give an answer.

But, by the same token, we live in a country that's very good at creating jobs, but is not as good at providing family supports; in which people are busier and busier and busier; and in which virtually everybody has some trouble balancing work and family during the period of the child's life. Even parents who are staying at home have trouble doing it.

And it is a problem that is more severe for single parents and people that have more than one job or people that have trouble getting around. It's a problem that's more severe for people that work for very modest incomes. But I don't think I know any parents who are working who have not had some periods in their lives when they worried whether they were letting their kids down because they weren't spending enough time with them; or whether there were too many forces out there that were kind of undermining that.

And one of the things that I have learned, in ways large and small over an unfortunately increasingly elderly existence -- (laughter) -- is that everybody has got a story, everybody. And every child has a spark inside. And I believe that everyone has a role to play and ought to be given a chance. And as important as work is -- and I say that coming from a family of workaholics -- the most important work that society does is still to raise children. And if that work is done well, the rest of it pretty well takes care of itself.

And so we're here, basically, to do all the things that Hillary said. I think when a tragedy befalls a child, or a child is involved in a tragedy -- a school shooting, or this terrible incident at the Washington Zoo -- it throws it up in large relief. But I think that one of the things we ought to do in beginning this conference is to take a more balanced view. And I want to be very brief because I want you to have the maximum amount of time with the keynote speaker and with the panelists. But I think it's important that we have a balanced view of what teenage life is like today.

And I asked the Council of Economic Advisors to actually get me a statistical portrait of teenage America. And here is a brief summary. The good news is that the teenagers are far healthier, more prosperous, and look forward to more promising lives than ever before in our history. The economic rewards of education are at an all-time high. Teens have responded by completing high school and enrolling college at record rates.

Last year, for the first time in the history of the country, the high school graduation of African Americans and the white majority was almost statistically identical. The dropout rate among Hispanic young people is still too high, but that's largely explained, I think, by the fact that we have still a very large number of Hispanic children in our schools who are first-generation immigrants whose first language is not English, and they come from families that are struggling to make ends meet, and very often they drop out to go to work still. But we're making progress there, as well.

More teenagers than ever before volunteering to serve through community service. Many harmful behaviors are actually on the decline, including youth violence, homicide, suicide, teen pregnancy, and, in the last couple of years, drug use. That's the good news.

The report also highlights some significant challenges. There are still significant opportunity gaps between white students and students of color. Teen smoking, drug use and pregnancy are still far too high. And despite a marked decline in teen homicide over the past few years, still far too many communities are scarred by gun violence.

Interestingly enough, statistically the Council of Economic Advisers found that gun-related teen deaths from deliberate acts and from accidents are highly correlated with gun ownership and possession rates. In states with fewer guns in fewer households, there are fewer gun deaths.

Perhaps the most empowering finding in the new report is the extents to which parents have the opportunity to guide their teenagers properly. Sitting down to dinner can have an enormously positive impact. The report found that teenagers who had dinner with -- listen to this: The report found that teenagers that had dinner with their parents five nights a week are far more likely to avoid smoking, drinking, violence, suicide and drugs. This holds true for single-parent, as well as two-parent families, across all income and racial groups. Now, obviously if that is not possible, and sometimes it's not possible, then it's really important to find some way to fill that gap, but it's a stunning statistical finding.

For the past seven years, the First Lady and I have worked with our administration to try to support parents' efforts to raise healthy, hopeful and responsible children. I'd also like to acknowledge the invaluable efforts of Vice President and Mrs. Gore, who have had -- even before he joined me, they were sponsoring a family conference every year in Tennessee to deal with these issues. It's really one of the most astonishing, consistent commitments I believe in the country. And they've done a world of good and I'm very grateful to them.

I'll always be proud that the first bill I signed as President was the Family and Medical Leave Act, a law that now has given more than 20 million Americans the opportunity to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave without losing their jobs. And I remember when I signed it, it had previously been vetoed on the theory that it would hurt the economic growth of the country. If that's what it was designed to do, it's been a very poor failure. (Laughter.)

What it has done is to prove that it's good economics to balance work and family; that the more parents can succeed at home, the more free they are, psychologically, to be productive at work; and we ought to do more.

I have asked the Congress to include more firms in the Family and Medical Leave law and to expand the purposes for which people can take family leave. We have also tried to give states the flexibility to use funds in federal accounts to help to finance paid leave. We've worked hard on this, and I think it's very important that we recognize that the United States has done a great job at creating jobs, but we still give far less support to the responsibility of balancing work and family than virtually every other industrialized country in the world. And it is very important to do that.

We've also worked hard to turn teenagers away from unhealthy lives, toward healthy futures. The rate of drug use has been cut, in part by the powerful antidrug messages that have been broadcast, and some of you here have helped us with that. We have done our best to engage the tobacco industry in what has been a fairly epic and sometimes frustrating struggle to reduce teen smoking. We made the single largest investment in children's health care since Medicaid was created. And we're working to get more of our kids -- and increasingly, I hope,

this year, their parents -- enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program. And we're working to make our schools safer.

I think that we also need comprehensive strategies to stem violence both in and out of schools. Our program would dramatically expand quality after-school programs. When I started, we had \$1 million dollars for after-school programs; then we went to \$20 million; then we went to \$200 million. This year we've got \$400 million in after-school programs. And I've proposed \$1 billion, and if we pass it, we'll be able to say that every child, at least in every troubled neighborhood in the United States of America, can be in an after-school program. This is a big deal, and I hope you will support it. (Applause.)

I also want to say a word of thanks to all those who have supported AmeriCorps, including City Year and its other components. We've now had more than 150,000 young people earning money for college while serving in their communities. And we're trying to get more and more people to start earlier, to get high school kids, junior high school kids, involved in community service.

Maryland has become the first state in America to require community service as a condition of a high school diploma. And listen to this: The study found that teens who participate in service projects in their communities are 75 percent less likely to drop out of school -- because they're connected in a way that I think is profoundly important.

Hillary talked about the work we're doing with the industry to give parents the tools to protect their children in the new media age. I do think we need a voluntary system that goes across TV, movies and video games. If we can find some way to develop that, it would make a lot of sense. There's a lot of information coming at parents -- you know, I try to sort it all out when I see it. And I think it would be better if there were -- it's almost like you need a dictionary to explain the differences in the TV ratings and movie ratings and the video game ratings, so we have to find some way this can be made more usable.

And today, I want to just mention two things that we're trying to do to help parents and their teenagers. First, I'm signing an Executive Order to prohibit discrimination against parents in the work force of the federal government. (Applause.) Believe it or not, there are still some employers who are reluctant to hire or to promote employees who have children at home. Some of you may have experienced this yourselves. The goal of this order simply says, no glass ceiling for parents. The job they're doing at home is more important, anyway, and if they can do your job, you ought not to stop them.

Second, I am pleased to announce that our National Campaign Against Youth Violence, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and Tobacco-Free Kids, and the national government have teamed up to produce a comprehensive guide to help parents support their teenagers through this crucial and often difficult developmental period.

Now, I want to introduce our keynote speaker now, and say I'm sorry that I can't stay for the rest of the day, but after he speaks I'll have to leave. But let me say that I want to thank you for coming, again. I want to thank so many of you here for a lifetime of commitment. People

ask me all the time, why are we focusing on these things when all the indicators are good and things are going better. This is the time to be thinking about -- I will say again -- how we can deal with the significant challenges of this country. And anybody that thinks that we've done everything we need to do to help the parents with teenagers, hasn't had teenagers and hasn't been around lately.

It seems to me that if we can't deal with these big social issues now, when we're prosperous, when we're doing well; if we can't strengthen the bonds of our community now, when will we ever get around to doing it. That's why we're here. (Applause.)

I want to introduce a person who embodies much of the good that's going on to help parents through having the village do its part -- in the First Lady's words -- to raise our children. Ben Casey is the President of the YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas. He has degrees in psychology and counseling from UCLA and Chapman College. He currently oversees programs -- listen to this -- 145 program centers that serve a quarter of all the families in the greater Dallas region. We've asked him to speak to us today about his extensive experience with teens, the wise new poll which also has some important findings about the way teens and parents view their communication and time together.

And let me just finally say, Mr. Casey, as I bring you up, every minute I have ever spent with young people, as President and before, but especially as President, has reaffirmed to me how special they are, what enormous potential they have. Even the ones that can't make it, really want to and wish they could. And what a profound responsibility we have. And I want to honor you, sir, because you spend every day trying to make sure we don't lose a single one. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. CASEY: Mr. President, Mrs. Clinton, and distinguished guests. The teen years should be some of the best years in a person's life. Unfortunately, for more and more young people, they are becoming the most difficult years of their lives. One thing is certain: They are the critical years in that they serve as the basic platform from which the adult is eventually shaped.

For those of you today that are here that are teenagers, I'm going to let you in on a secret: While you may think that some adults look down on you, the truth is that almost all of us here today see ourselves still in teen images. We're always a little surprised to see this older person looking back at us from the mirror. (Laughter.)

We have all gathered here today to address the special needs of today's teens. Pressures from school and family and friends can be overwhelming for many. This generation faces unique challenges that we must all do our part to help ensure their success.

It's been my privilege to work with young people through the YMCA for 34 years of the 150 years the Y has been committed to community service. These young people have honored me with their trust. They have shared with me their most intimate concerns, their aspirations, and their life challenges.

As they struggle to gain the experience and the wisdom to mature, it's clear that they are in need of support from adults in their lives. There's a critical need for an adult to care and take the time to listen to our teens.

I still have a vivid memory of Tom, a young man I met at a YMCA mountain camp. One day, he asked if he could talk to me privately, and he confided to me that he was considering suicide. When I asked why, he said that he could not live up to his father's expectations, and he could not live with the shame of disappointing his father.

I arranged a meeting, and after talking, we learned that Tom's father only wanted him to have the confidence to reach for the stars, not necessarily, as Tom had thought, to become a doctor or a lawyer. Tom did go on to succeed in the arts. And until his father's death, there was no father more proud of his son.

Communication is the key to developing the relationships teens and parents need to effectively solve problems together. For this conference, the YMCA of the U.S.A. has conducted a survey to gauge the effectiveness of communication efforts between parents and their teens.

It doesn't surprise me that in almost every case, parents have a higher perception of how effective they are in sharing their values and beliefs than the teenage daughters and sons. It's for this reason that the YMCA has launched a nationwide campaign to serve more teens and their families. Our goal is to serve one in five teens over the next five years.

What we have found in our youth and teen programs in Dallas, is that today's parents have less family time than their parents did when they were growing up. Communication has always been difficult, but now that the majority of parents have full-time jobs and live a fast-paced life, they even have less time for their teens. We have to look for innovative new ways to solve this problem.

In order to cut down on the time away from home, the Dallas Y has initiated a partnership with a grocery store and pharmacy to allow parents to pick up their groceries, dry cleaning and pharmacy items at the YMCA, at the same time as picking up their children from our programs. Our only requirement is that they must go home, turn off the television, have dinner together as a family. To facilitate family conversations, the YMCA distributes weekly appropriate stories, with themes for discussion, for these family dinners.

We started this program in response to a working mom's anxiety about not having time for evening parenting classes that were being offered by the Y. She shared her overwhelming daily schedule of commuting, work and errands, that left her exhausted at the end of every day. We realized that family meal time, as you heard earlier, is quickly disappearing, and the time parents have to spend with their teens can be dominated by logistics -- did you do your homework? Have you cleaned your room? Little time remains for quality conversation, to share concerns, feelings and values.

Today, through our panelists and other experts that we have with us, we'll learn that teens must be a priority. How can parents learn to communicate their values and make the time to be a greater part of their teen's lives? How can teens express their feelings in a way that the parents understand? This is what today is all about.

There's a quote by H. Jackson Brown, Jr., I'd like to share with, particularly, parents. He said, "Live that so when your children think of fairness and integrity, they think of you." I believe in this generation of young people. I know they are capable of carrying us into the next millennium and beyond. But first, we must learn to listen to each other. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you so much, and I really appreciate your not only sharing the results of your survey, but even more importantly the results of your many, many years of work with young people. And we have some terrific people who are going to be here throughout the day, and we're going to get to as many as we possibly can.

I want to get right into this panel, and the topic is: Who Are Today's Teens, And What Do They Need? We have some very impressive panel members, and they're going to share with us who are these people we call teenagers. We know they're the most racially and ethnically diverse group of teenagers in our nation's history. We also know that they have much in common with one another.

The President is fond of quoting Dr. Eric Lander, who spoke at a Millennium Evening that we held last October, who told us that all human beings have DNA that is 99.9 percent identical. Now, sometimes when we look at teenagers, we think they're a different species, but they're not. They are just like us. (Laughter.) And it should not, therefore, be surprising that they share many of the same concerns.

And many of the parents are bewildered at how quickly their preteens and teenage children are growing up these days. They seem to be more mature physically, and the way that they act. And we have two experts here on the panel who will talk to us about the changes that occur during adolescence. And I would like to start with Dr. Jacqueline Eccles, who is a psychology professor and research scientist at the University of Michigan. Much of her work has focused on adolescent development. Recently, she chaired the McArthur Foundation Project on Successful Pathways Through Middle Childhood.

She will be followed by Dr. J. Giedd, the Chief of Brain Imaging at the Child Psychiatry Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health. He's also a practicing clinician who has written extensively in medical and science journals on the biological basis of behavioral, cognitive and emotional disturbances. And he will share with us his recent work on healthy brain development of adolescents.

So let us begin with Dr. Eccles.

DR. ECCLES: Thank you very much, and I am delighted to be here. Adolescence begins with the onset of puberty and ends with the transition into adulthood.

For much of the world, this period is rather short, lasting two to three years. Here and in other Western industrialized countries, the period has grown to as long as 15 years, because of the time needed to train for successful employment in our complex and highly technological societies.

I will focus my comments today, however, on the years between 10 and 16, when most of our young people are still in school and living at home. It is also our last, best chance to prepare our children adequately for healthy, happy and productive lives.

Early adolescence, the years from 10 to 14, is one of the most labile periods in the life span. Rapid changes occur on all levels. This period is initiated by major changes in the hormonal system, leading to rapid changes in body morphology. Together, these two biological changes can increase emotionality and interest in sexuality.

They also affect the way adults interact with our youth in both positive and negative ways. Some adults see these changes as evidence of increasing maturity and respond with encouragement, support and excitement. Adolescents thrive when surrounded with such adults. Other adults see these changes as a threat and respond with hostility, tighter controls and other unsupportive behaviors, alienating the very young people who are in their charge.

Rapid changes also occur at the social level. We require most of our teenagers to make a major school transition, moving from early elementary school into junior high school or middle school. Unfortunately, the nature of many of these schools leads to a decrease in close adult contact, and increases in both the segregation of our youth into peer-oriented groups, and the alienation of youth from their schools and the larger society. This shift can be further exacerbated with the later transition into high school.

We also encourage our young adolescents to become involved in heterosexual activities, like dating, while at the same time providing them very little guidance related to sexuality, intimacy, and romantic relationships. Given these two major social changes, it should come as no surprise that adolescents turn increasingly to their peer groups for guidance and emotional support.

These biological and social changes can also lead to conflicts at home. This is the period in which our children must mature from dependence on their parents to taking greater responsibility for themselves. This requires renegotiating the power relationship between parents and adolescents. In some families, this renegotiation process can generate conflicts.

What else do we know about this period? First and foremost, most adolescents and their families weather this period rather successfully. Nonetheless, about 25 percent of our adolescents and their families are at risk for less than optimal development during the teenage years. For the most part, these youth are at risk because we as a society have failed to provide adequate in- and out-of-school experiences for them.

We also know that it is a time when our children need to figure out who they are, and what is their place in the larger society. It is a time of increases in both idealism and cynicism. It is a time for planning and preparing for the future. And for most youth, it is a time of optimism.

Finally, although we hear a lot about adolescents' desire for independence, what they want more than anything else is a meaningful role in their communities. Rather than independence, they want the opportunity to be effective, contributing members of their society. Unfortunately, we have failed to provide them with many such opportunities. Raising responsible and healthy adolescents requires us to provide such opportunities, as well as to make sure that all of our adolescents are given adequate training to make a successful transition into adulthood.

Today -- and I emphasize "today" -- we, as a society, are not doing very well in meeting these challenges. We need to do all we can to make sure all of our youth have both close, personal relationships with supportive adults, and the opportunities to be fully participating members of their communities. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much, Dr. Eccles. (Applause.) You've raised a lot of questions, which I hope we can get back to and discuss.

Now I'd like to hear from Dr. Giedd, who will help us understand what actually may be going on in the brains of young teenagers.

DR. GIEDD: Well, thank you very much. It's an honor for me to be here.

Advances in computers, mathematics and imaging technology now allow us to examine the developing brain as never before. And what we've found surprised us. Any parent of a teen can tell you that a nine-year-old and a 13-year-old's brains are very different. Yet, to actually pin down those brain differences in a scientific way has been elusive. This is because nature has gone through a great deal of trouble to protect the brain. It's wrapped in a tough, leathery membrane, surrounded by a protective moat of fluid, and then completely encased in bone.

This has shielded it well from falls or attacks from predators; but it has also shielded it from scientists. (Laughter.) Most ways of looking at the living brain, such as X-rays or CT scans use harmful radiation that prevent us from using these to study healthy children.

MRI, or magnetic resonance imaging, changed all that. It allows us to get exquisitely accurate pictures of the living, growing human brain, and has helped launch a new era of adolescent neuroscience.

Brain development takes place by greatly over-producing the number of brain cells and connections. And this is followed by a highly competitive elimination phase in which only a small percentage of the cells and connections will make it. This process was thought to occur only in the womb, maybe during the first 18 months of life. But when we actually followed the

development of children by scanning their brains each two years, we were amazed to find a second wave of over-production -- a whole decade later than we had originally thought.

Although the total size of the brain is already 95 percent of its adult size by first grade, the gray matter or thinking part of the brain continues to thicken as the brain cells grow extra connections, much like a tree growing extra branches, twigs or roots.

In the frontal part of the brain, which is involved in planning, judgment and organization, this over-production process peaks at about age 11 in girls, and 12 in boys -- about the same time as puberty. Then, the excess connections are eliminated or pruned, resulting in a thinning of the gray matter. We don't yet know all the forces that drive this adolescent pruning process; that's the next phase of our research. But one idea is the "use it or lose it" principle -- those cells and connections that are used will survive and flourish; those cells and connections that are not used will wither and die.

We feel this is an incredibly empowering concept for teens. Unlike when they were in the womb or during the first 18 months of their lives, the teens themselves can choose their activities and may be able to help guide the hard-wiring of their brains for the adult years.

It's an unfortunate irony that during this adolescent pruning process, when the brain is so vulnerable, it's also the time when experimentation with drugs and alcohol is most likely. It's been very gratifying in my clinical practice that many teens, armed with knowledge about what's actually happening in their brains, choose not to take those risks. But sometimes, through no fault of the parent or teen, the pruning process can go awry. For instance, in childhood schizophrenia, there is an over-pruning -- as much as four-fold in the frontal areas of the brain.

The impact of medicines on this process of developmental pruning is largely unknown. On the one hand, the medication used in teenagers is vastly understudied, so we don't know many of the potential risks, especially the long-term risks. But on the other hand, medicines properly used may help the adolescent have a more healthy brain state, and therefore have more healthy hard-wiring, and may lessen the need for medicines as an adult. So it's a complicated issue. There are risks to not using medicines, and there are risks to using medicines in the teens.

While much work remains to be done, it's clear from a biological perspective that brain development is far, far from over during the first years of life. This represents a second chance for teens to make positive changes for themselves and for their futures. I'm truly thrilled to be part of this exciting process of discovery, and look forward to striving to provide information for parents, for teachers, for society, and for the teens themselves to help optimize the development of their brains.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much, Dr. Giedd. I'd like to call on someone, now, in the audience, because of course there are so many people in this room who have such a wealth of experience, and it's been very hard figuring out how we could get everyone to participate. But I

would like to ask for comments from Angela Diaz, the Director of the Mt. Sinai Adolescent Health Center.

DR. DIAZ: Thank you. I would like to say that after 20 years serving adolescents, I have learned a few things. One of them is that adolescents are great health care consumers -- if they are engaged and they understand the process. Also, I have learned that we can have the greatest impact in that age group, whether we are parents, educators or health professionals.

The other thing that I learned is that we design services for adults, and then we want to fit teenagers in that model. And when it doesn't work, we blame them and we call them noncompliant, when, indeed, if we actually designed services to meet their needs, they would utilize those services. And those services need to be warm, welcoming; the adolescent needs to feel respected; they need to be provided at times with those so they can utilize them, including evening and weekend hours. They need to be provided regardless of the adolescent's ability to pay for them or not. And they need to honor confidentiality.

I think parents are the most important things for teens. The teenager needs their love, their nurturance, their understanding and their advocacy. But at times, teenagers are not able to tell their parents certain things, and we need to make sure that we can honor and provide confidential services when needed. I am the parent of three teens and I certainly hope that if my kids ever need anything that they cannot tell me, someone would make sure that they get the services that they need.

The other thing that I want to add is that those services need to be advertised so that the teens know where to go. And I think that's one of the beauties of school-based clinics. Because the services are provided right in school, where the teenagers are. They provide a great opportunity for follow-up and continuity, and they also happen to be extremely cost effective.

And I also learned that in addition to the physical health of teens, we need to attend their mental health needs -- whether they are stress related, depression, abuse or violence. Violence, including abuse, has become the number one public health issue in my work. I find that adolescent females are sexually abused more often -- they have a history of sexual abuse more often than any other condition. I'm in the field for 20 years, and we need to understand and realize that.

And the last thing that I want to add is that well-intentioned adults -- including parents, educators, health professionals, researchers, policy-makers and funders -- tend to see adolescent health in a varied problem, deficit-based way. And we really need to -- that leads to a lot of fragmentation. We need to move toward a more holistic, comprehensive, multidisciplinary wellness model, in which appropriate nutrition, fitness, and adequate sleep form the infrastructure for adolescent well-being.

And I just want to say that as a society, we need to help adolescents grow up happy, healthy, well-educated, with hopes and opportunities. They are our thermostat: if they do well, we will do well as a nation. And I think adolescents are just great. They are terrific. Thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much, Dr. Diaz, for your comments. And I'm glad you mentioned adequate sleep -- (laughter) -- which is an issue that we're hearing more about these days, as there's more and more research about how teenagers need more sleep. I don't know, Dr. Giedd and Dr. Eccles, if that has a biological base. But certainly it seems to have, and that many teenagers are chronically fatigued, which has to interfere with their biological and social functioning.

Our next panelist is Karen Pittman, someone I've known for many, many years, when she and I were both at the Children's Defense Fund. And she was there working to promote an adolescent policy agenda, and later when she agreed to serve as the Director of the President's Crime Prevention Council.

Karen is a sociologist by training, a nationally recognized leader in the field of youth development who helped to launch the movement America's Promise. She's currently the Senior Vice President of the International Youth Foundation, which is an organization dedicated to improving conditions and prospects for children and youth worldwide. And I think Karen has such a wealth of experience and can help us understand what all teenagers need -- the assets they need in their lives -- to develop into successful adults.

Karen Pittman.

DR. PITTMAN: Thank you. To answer the question, what young people need, we have to remind ourselves -- we first have to say, what do we define -- how do we define success. Too often our messages even today about what we want from young people are negative. We want them to not get pregnant, not use drugs, not get in trouble, not be violent. And parents and policy-makers alike are very concerned about the risky behaviors that threaten young people's futures, if not their lives.

But few parents stop their list there when they talk about their young people. Beyond wanting young people to not get in trouble, parents, and I think all of us, want to see them acquire the attitudes, the values, the skills and the behaviors that will position them for the future, and for success.

Problem-free isn't fully prepared. Anyone -- as an employer, if we say, I have Johnny, he's not in a gang, he's not on drugs, he's not illiterate, he's not a dropout, he's not a teen father, will you hire him -- hopefully, will say, what can he do. (Laughter.) So problem-free isn't fully prepared. And academic confidence, while it is absolutely critical and far too elusive still in this country for many young people, academic confidence is not enough to ensure success. We have to make sure that young people have the social, emotional, vocational and civic confidence that they need, and that we expect of them.

At the International Youth Foundation, we talk about five Cs -- the fact that young people need to be competent, they need to be confident, they need to have character, connections, and we have added the fifth C -- they need to be contributors. Not just have opportunities to

contribute, but have very clear expectations from us that is what they need to do, as a part of being teens and as a part of being adults.

If these are the outcomes that we want from young people, what are the basic inputs? You've heard them today, but I'm going to repeat them anyhow, since I have a few minutes. What is it that communities must provide in order to fully expect that our young people, in school or out of school, affluent or low-income, have the mix of services, supports and opportunities that they need in order to stay engaged and be full participants?

They are some basic things. First of all -- and we can't underestimate this -- young people need the basic care and services that were just talked about, that are affordable, appropriate, and accessible, and if necessary, confidential. Those services range from health care to transportation. But services alone are not enough, and services alone, we have learned, will not draw young people in from the streets or from dangerous behaviors. They need supports and opportunities.

Young people -- and we've heard this -- need people in their lives. They need adults who will listen, who will guide, who will respect them, and who will help them navigate. They need places, safe, stimulating, structured places where they can live, they can learn, they can work, they can play.

They need possibilities. They need high-quality instruction and training, not just in the academics, but in anything else they're interested in. They need opportunities to work. They need opportunities to contribute through service. We can enlist teens to clean vacant lots; we'd have to also make sure that they're prepared and ready to advocate for making that lot stay clean through better zoning and other policies.

We can give young people chances to do job shadowing; but in the end, we have to make sure they have jobs. The list of inputs that young people need is not very complicated. But these lists are powerful, and when these inputs are provided, young people thrive. You've heard that. You'll hear later from Dr. Blum, who will talk about the fact that we have research that suggests that the more young people have these basic inputs, the better off they are, the more likely they are to succeed, the less likely they are to engage in risky behaviors.

And we know that these inputs cannot be overly-redundant. They have to be provided in as many settings as possible -- families, schools, youth organizations, the workplace. These inputs are sensible and they are simple. As mentioned, America's Promise struck a chord in many communities by offering a basic list of five fundamental resources: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, marketable skills and opportunities to give back. And they challenged communities to provide all five. There are other lists. The Search Institute, public-private ventures. We know what young people need. But, still, these inputs are not available for every teen.

Families play a critical role in being the brokers, the monitors and the guides for their young people, to make sure they get those services, supports and opportunities. But there is a cruel irony in the fact that the parents who have the fewest personal resources live in the

neighborhoods that have the fewest community resources. We have to address that, because too often the best that a parent can do, while saving the funds to move to a safer place, is to keep their young person indoors, because the dangerous people, places and possibilities in their neighborhoods far outweigh the safe ones -- not to even mention the stimulating ones. And this is a sad commentary on this country.

Saddest, perhaps, is the fact that we really, to date, have no way of knowing how bad or how good the situation is for individual young people. Common sense and research suggest that these inputs are cumulative, that the more teens have the better off they are. But, currently, we have no way to track how many young people get how many of these resources. We've had lots of individual data, but we really can't add it up to give this.

And while we know that we have data -- often too much data -- on the problems that young people have, we have very few ways of knowing how well they are doing, beyond academic success.

And this really is unfortunate, because the teens and young adults of America and their families have goals beyond staying out of trouble, and beyond graduating from high school. Our trend data suggest that problems are going down. We applaud this; we want it to continue. But we will not see improvements in teen prospects unless we can ensure that they have a full array of the people, places, and possibilities that they need to thrive, and a strong sense that we expect every one of them to do so. Thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we started our program with a video that highlighted some of the young people who are with us, who did such a good job. Now I think it's time we heard from another young person. Emily McDonald, who is in our audience today, is 17. She grew up in Clarkrange, Tennessee, in Appalachia. As a young child, she was sponsored by Save the Children.

Now, all of us remember Save the Children asking that we sponsor children. Well, here is one of the children who was sponsored in our own country. She also benefited from the Head Start program. And today, she's a straight-A student, a cheerleader, and a dedicated volunteer with Save the Children, helping to renovate that old Head Start center she attended as a child so it can serve as an after-school center.

Emily, I'd like you to tell us a little bit about yourself and what you're trying to do for your community.

MS. MCDONALD: Thank you, Mrs. Clinton, and good morning, everyone. I'm from a community called Clarkrange, in Fentress County, Tennessee. Our county's population is approximately 16,000 residents. The annual income for a family of three is just over \$13,000, far below the national average of \$20,000. There are 386 students at my high school, grades 7 through 12. Our area does not have a lot of resources or activities for young people. And for this reason, I have seen a lot of youth in my community become involved in drugs and violence because they do not have good alternatives.

My community and I are very fortunate and thankful to the Save the Children organization. I have been a sponsored child since age seven. With their help and the help of my grandmother, Estelle Cooper, who has been an active Save the Children volunteer since 1968, we are able to offer numerous in-school and after-school tutoring and mentoring programs, as well as art and reading programs. We do countless hours of volunteer community service projects and are able to provide better choices for children from pre-school through high school.

While giving back to our community, I also have a strong family base and much love and support, which empowers me to take on large tasks. I am especially close to my mother and grandmother. They have instilled in me the values of honesty, responsibility and to always do my best. I feel these things are important in all areas of life. My family and I enjoy family time, going to the movies and talking at mealtime -- by supporting each other in all our individual activities.

After my high school graduation next year I plan to go to college in my home state of Tennessee and pursue a career in medicine, and also give back to my community and country. That's the least I think I can do. Thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you so much, Emily. The way that you have described your connections between your family and your community is exactly what we've been hearing about today. I think you've got your mother with you today, don't you? And Mrs. McDonald, why don't you stand up and let us congratulate you on raising such a responsible and resourceful impressive young woman, as your daughter. (Applause.)

Now, our next speakers may not be scientists or researchers, but they are experts. They are the parents of three teenagers. They both used to be six feet tall before they became the parents of three teenagers. (Laughter.)

I know that everyone in this audience and all of the people who are following this on the satellite transmission and the different sites around the country are familiar with the many films and roles that Danny DeVito and Rhea Perlman have starred in; the television characters they've created on "Taxi" and "Cheers," and, increasingly, we're familiar with all of the movies that Danny has produced.

But you may not know about all of the work they do on behalf of children, most recently as spokespersons for the After School Alliance. And we've invited them here because they are two parents who have really focused a lot of energy and concern and love, despite their obviously busy schedules, not only on their own children, but on children in general, trying to provide better opportunities for them as well.

And, Danny and Rhea, why can't you give us a few hints, then, about raising responsible and resourceful teenagers.

MR. DEVITO: You want to go?

MS. PERLMAN: No, you go. Go ahead.

MR. DEVITO: It's negotiation, the whole thing. (Laughter.)

Wow, this is really exciting. First of all, thanks so much for this opportunity to be here and listen to everybody. I'm writing a lot of things down that I think I'm going to try to apply.

The one thing that you were saying, Doc, was about, you know, if you told teenagers, that if they do all these things they're going to lose brain matter, I think they wouldn't do it. (Laughter.) You know, just show them. Get a brain before and a brain after -- you see that stuff dwindling down? I wouldn't do anything. (Laughter.) I mean, that's key, right?

Anyway, I'm really a lucky guy, because I have -- you know, for 17 years I've been able to come home from work, really come home from work and hang out with my kids. Ninety percent of the time I'm successful at that. I mean, I try to do that, and Rhea is the same way. You know, it's like, hey, I eat dinner with them, and hang out, try to be there while they do their homework. I mean, I can't go near math or science or anything like that, you know what I'm saying? (Laughter.) But I can ask them the questions off of those note cards and things. You know, spell this, or something. As long as I've got the answer in front of me. (Laughter.)

But you know -- and as they grow older, they have all their own things that they start getting into. Now I come in the house, and I make sure they know I'm home, I yell into Lucy's room, I say, Lucy -- she's my 17-year-old, you know -- and I hear her go like this: hold on a second. Hi, Dad. I'm on the phone. Okay, all right. So, just want you to know I'm here. And I go to Gracie's room, and she's on the computer, you know, and she's doing homework, and I hear the click-click-click-click, the typing going on and stuff. And I just say, I'm here, you know.

And then I ran out in the hallway, and Jake, who's 12, actually going to be 13 in October. He runs down the hallway -- this you'll appreciate -- he had a towel, a wet towel, it was all twisted up and wrapped around with rubber bands and string. And he said, you know, this is a brain -- now this is a brain, see? It looked like it was in the shape of a brain. He said, you know, Dad, that if you take the gray matter of a brain and you stretch it out, it would be the size of an office desk. Right? (Laughter.) Am I right? (Laughter.)

And he uptalks, my son. You know what uptalk is? You know, like, where they don't end a sentence and they keep talking like this, and they go like that. And if you take the arteries and capillaries and veins in your body and you stretch them all around you can go four times around the world? (Laughter.) I go, uh-huh, okay. Whew, down the block -- he's down the end of the hallway and I'm left there with a puddle from the dripping towel. (Laughter.)

But uptalk is really interesting. You've probably experienced it, like all the doctors and people who have studied it. I think it comes from people not -- you know, kids want to be heard, and they're afraid that if they stop, adults are going to cut them off and they're not going to talk to them.

So, anyway, I think -- in October, like I said, I'm going to have three teenagers in the house. I'm not looking for sympathy. (Laughter.) I'm bragging. I think it's really good. I like

hanging out with them. And there are so many pressures -- teenagers have so many pressures. And a lot of times, the pressures come from the very people that they turn to for help -- counselors and teachers and parents.

There are so many things going through their head, all kinds of weird thoughts and whatever, and what do they do? And if they don't have anybody that they trust, that they can turn to, it's devastating. They're confused, or they're mad, or they're sad, or a combination of all that at once. It doesn't matter where a teenager is from, because they're susceptible and it's easy for them to get into trouble if they have a lot of free time on their hands, there's no guidance.

I think that's what we have to do -- we have to listen to our kids. And if we're there all the time, that's okay. And we have to tell them the truth. That's big. We have to really level with them. It's that seven years between -- the teenage years when they go from being a kid to being an adult. And I think it's also a key thing that you make sure you tell your kids that there was a time when you went through those seven years and you weren't so wise and so perfect like you are now. (Laughter.) Just tell them that you understand what they're going through.

This is really good. I am really happy to be here. Thank you. Rhea, you're probably going to jump in here now. (Laughter and applause.)

MS. PERLMAN: He's such a great dad, really. (Laughter.) We try to spend as much time with our kids as we possibly can. We're there a lot. We don't go to see Limp Bizkit concerts with them or anything, or hang around when they're on the phone. But it's just very important that we stay intimately and deeply involved with their lives, even though they may be bigger than us and can drive. (Laughter.)

But when we're not there, we try to know who they're with and what they're doing and make sure that they've got something valuable going on. But we're kind of lucky that way because we have excellent resources. And I think that most parents really want to be with their children a lot, but very few parents can physically be there for them as much as they would like to because they work.

And most parents do, and some have two jobs or three jobs, and they don't have any resources. So if their kid isn't in the school play or in the band or writing for the paper or on a team, then they have nothing and they don't know what their kids are doing. And there aren't even grandmas or neighbors around that much anymore to look in on their kids because they're out working, too.

So to address something that Ms. Pittman was talking about, I think that kids really need safe places to go after school. Places where they can do things that make them feel good about themselves -- work on stuff that they're interested in, get help with their homework, get something to eat if they're hungry, where they can have access to computers and music, art, sports, where they can just talk to an adult if they're having a problem, or chill out with some kids.

So for many years, Danny and I have been working with an organization -- it's a terrific organization called LA's Best. And they set up and run after-school programs in Los Angeles elementary schools. These programs are free, they're voluntary. And the sign-up rate is huge. I mean, there are waiting lists for this program. And the people who supervise the kids -- 90 percent of them are from the community. They're trained; some of them are salaried, some of them volunteer, and some of them are high school students who do it as part of their work-study programs, which is great for them as well.

And the kids in L.A.'s Best love it there. They love it. They feel safer. They like school more. They get better grades. And then, when they end up going to middle school, the absentee rate of these kids, compared to the kids who haven't been through the program, drops way down. This means that they're staying in school, and this is key, because -- this is a statistic that someone told me the other day. It says, the correlation between school dropouts and teen violence is greater than between smoking and lung cancer.

I mean, you know, there's a lot of talk about standards and testing and all that. I've been reading a lot in the newspaper about this. But if there's nobody in the classroom, all the standards and the testing in the world don't mean diddley-squat.

So L.A.'s Best, though, is not in every elementary school, it's in no high schools or junior highs. And that's only in Los Angeles. So Danny and I have joined the After-School Alliance, whose goal is to have every child in the United States have access to quality, affordable after-school care by the year 2010. (Applause.) And that's why the President and the First Lady's commitment to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which is a federally funded program to make after-school activities available, is so important.

And I don't want to seem greedy, but -- I am. (Laughter.) We need more. It seems to me that the federal government, the states, the cities and the private sector should all pull together to make helping parents take care of our children a priority. Because parents constantly worry about their kids -- constantly. The period of highest juvenile violence is in the hour after school ends.

So to know that your kid isn't out on the street or, for that matter, home alone surfing the channels on the TV, watching who knows what, would bring a lot of peace. And teenagers are already under so much pressure, as we've heard, from peer groups, from competition, from school, from their hormones -- to have a positive option, instead of the extra burden of having to fend for themselves as kids would mean a lot to a lot of kids.

So thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: I thank both Danny and Rhea for sharing those experiences. And, Danny, thank you for talking about how important it is just to hang out with your kids -- without an agenda, without a plan, without trying to make something happen, but just to be there for them and have a chance to learn about the brain as a wadded-up towel. That's something he wanted to tell you.

MR. DEVITO: That's right. That's right.

MRS. CLINTON: And, Rhea, thank you for yours and Danny's commitment to after school programs. And I especially appreciate your mentioning how, in some of the programs older kids, young teens, are among those who supervise the younger kids, which is such a critical way of giving young people some responsibility.

One of our problems is that there is not a lot for kids to do anymore. There aren't the chores that used to be part of daily growing up. And I think a lot of parents don't either feel they can or think it's kind of a waste of time to assign those sorts of chores. There's not the daily work that people had to do. And so we've got to create responsible roles for young people. And doing what you're doing is so critical to that.

I'm very grateful to this panel, and I'm going to ask the next panel to come up. And as they do, let's give another round of applause to this panel. (Applause.) Karen, thank you so much.

MRS. CLINTON: This second panel is focused on what parents can do to help teens, and what communities can do to help teens and parents. I was very struck by what Karen Pittman said about how it's often the parents with the fewest resources who live in the communities with the fewest resources -- the fewest private resources in the areas with the fewest public resources. And so we need to be focused on what tools we can give to parents and communities.

You know, David Hamburg, who was instrumental in planning this conference and who is one of our nation's leading experts on adolescent development, called our next speaker's recent book, a book that I am reading, which I recommend to everyone, a book called "Our Last Best Shot" -- Dr. Hamburg called it the best book on adolescents ever written for the general public. And that's quite a recommendation.

Laura Sessions Stepp is a Pulitzer prize-winning journalist from The Washington Post. But she's here today to share with us what she learned in researching her book, which is really a road map for parents navigating the challenging teen years.

And she will then introduce our two next speakers, who are aptly named Edd and Edwin Speaker, which is very appropriate, who are featured in a chapter in her book that is called "Am I Competent?" which echoes some of our earlier panelists' comments about the importance of teens feeling competent.

So let me now turn to Laura Sessions Stepp.

MS. STEPP: Thank you, Mrs. Clinton, for inviting me to speak in front of this most distinguished and caring group.

I'd like to start by telling two short anecdotes. One night, three years ago, in a small Kansas town called Ulysses, a 13-year-old named Shannon spent an hour complaining to me about her mom, Brenda. Mom got onto her about e-mail; Mom got onto her about her grades;

her litany was as long as her face. And, yet, as soon as she got home, she headed straight for mom and gave her a big hug and said, mom, I love you.

In Durham, North Carolina, a 14-year-old named Mario had to sit out 8th grade because he had been suspended from school. When I asked him what was good about his life, he answered quickly, my parents, I be doing everything with them.

These stories illustrate a significant point: No matter how teenagers may criticize their mom and dad, parents matter to them a lot. Think about the poll Mrs. Clinton mentioned earlier: Three out of four teens wish they had more time with their parents -- three out of four. That doesn't surprise me.

When I began researching my book, I really wanted to look at kids' relationships with people other than parents -- coaches, teachers, mentors. The kids, themselves, kept leading me back to their families. And what I learned from following those 18 families over two years is that closeness with teens is earned, it's not a given.

The closeness is earned in three ways. I call these concepts the three R's of raising teens. Parents who raise healthy teens so respect for their kids' rapidly growing minds and bodies; they give their kids an increasing amount of responsibility; and they work at keeping a close relationship with them. Respect, responsibility and relationship are what's important, all the rest is details.

For example, in Kansas, Jack Richardson's mom, Gay, agreed to let him rope bulls in rodeo arenas when he was 12. That's respect. Edwin Speaker, whom you will meet in a few minutes, was selling art and incense for his mom on California's Venice Beach, also by age 12. Can you imagine letting your child run a booth, by himself, among hundreds of hucksters and weirdos on Venice Beach? (Laughter.) More comical, can you imagine your face when he brings home \$300 for one day's work? Now, that's responsibility.

Libby Segal, a 7th grader in Los Angeles, was caught smoking marijuana and drinking at a party. When her mother, Rebecca, picked Libby up and took one whiff, she could easily have blasted her with accusations. Instead, she asked a pointed question. What does it mean to do this with your friends, she asked. She forced Libby to think, even in her altered state. Rebecca told Libby, your friends' actions affect you, but you affect them, too.

You see, she respected her daughter's thinking skills, even though she knew her judgment had failed temporarily. She reminded Libby that she was responsible for herself and for others. And most importantly, she kept that relationship going through what could have been a disaster by asking questions calmly.

I've developed a theory about successful parenting relationships from years of writing about teenagers. Parents who do almost anything for their young children continue to make tangible sacrifices to stay close to their kids in adolescence. Some work split shifts so that a parent is always home. Some volunteer in school on their lunch hour. They listen to their kids, the smallest details that their kids want to share, and they never, ever give up on them.

One last story. Shannon, the Kansas girl who complained first and hugged second, continued to have a rocky relationship with her mother after I left that family. Two years after I left, she injured herself intentionally. Fortunately, she survived. Her mother, Brenda, hung in there, and a year later, after she had done that, Shannon gave her mom a cross-stitch wall hanging, and on it were the words, "If I didn't have you for a mother, I'd choose you for a friend."

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

And now it is my very great privilege to introduce Edd and Edwin Speaker, the father-son duo who fill the first chapter of "Our Last Best Shot." Edd grew up in Texas before moving to Los Angeles. He's an insurance claims consultant and has four children. Edwin, despite how big he is, he's his youngest. Edd and his ex-wife, Dorothy, split up when Edwin was seven. Edwin lives with his dad who, out of necessity, became a master at networking for his son.

Edwin, a high school freshman when I met him, and considerably shorter, is now a senior in high school. He's a talented drummer and disc jockey, and has plans -- at least, I think he has plans to become a sound engineer. Edd Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. It's an honor to be here, and to be among such great minds. You know, I sat and I listened to all the comments that have been made about the development of children. And you know, I kind of wondered, I said, well, who showed everybody what I was going to say? (Laughter.) Because most of the points that I intended to make have been touched on. And to me, that just kind of solidifies the thought that we all have a common goal, we all have a common caring about our kids.

And being a single parent, there have been a number of obstacles that I've faced as a single parent, and that I think all parents face, whether they be single parents or two-family parents. And the number one obstacle being to provide a safe environment -- to have an after-school program where you don't have to worry about what's happening to your kid, what type of influences that they're being exposed to, and that you can go about your daily job of earning a living for the family.

I think that in order to be a successful parent, in addition to being involved with your child on a daily basis, you have to start by networking. I've been asked a number of times, you know, tell us what you've done to be a successful parent. And I started by networking. And the question comes back, well, what does networking do?

Networking basically provides you with a base of resources. And when I say networking, I mean talking to other parents that have the same common sharing, that have the same goals, that may know about programs, that may know about resources that you don't know -- listening to these parents and taking advantage of them.

I started in the church. You know, Edwin and I are very religious people, and our entire moral basis is based on things that we've learned right and wrong, and we started in the church. In my church, I was talking with a church member who informed me about a sports clinic. I

went to the sports clinic, I talked with a parent at the sports clinic who told me about Challengers Boys and Girls Club, which is a member of the Boys' and Girls' Club of America.

I went over to Challengers, and they said, oh, yes, we've got a transportation program, we can pick you kid up from school, bring him here, help him with his homework, and you come by after you get off from work. I said, gee, how in the world am I going to afford something like this. They said, well, it's \$25 a year. You may not be able to afford it. And I was really excited about the fact that this wide array of services was available.

So I decided that I would become intensely involved with this organization, as well as with other community organizations, and that I would bring my son along, and try to show him rather than tell him. So I was constantly there with him. We were constantly involved. He's evolved into a quite a young man and I'm really proud of him.

One of the things I will say is that it would not be fair for me to try to take all the credit for Edwin's development. People come to me, they say, you've got such a great son, you did such an outstanding job. And while it's true he is a great son and a fine young man, I can't take all the credit for it. He has a strong relationship with his mom, he sees her on a regular basis. There are other people that obviously have influenced his life -- his teachers, there are other mentors. It takes a village to raise a kid, and while we all want to take all the credit, it's just not fair.

And I think, even more importantly so, is that a certain amount, if not a major part of it, goes to Edwin, because he's the one that makes the choice. I mean, you can present all these things, you can bring all the programs, you can have all the resources that you want -- but the kid still has to make a conscious decision: Yes, I want to be this way; yes, I want to be the kind of person that adults respect, that my peers like me. And I think he's made a conscious decision to be this kind of person.

I could go on and on naming all the things that he's done and the things that I've been concerned about, but I think that I can sum it up by saying that as a parent, we all constantly reach for the kind of positive personality components and character elements that we want our kid to have. But it's up to the kid to make these choices. And the one thing that we can do is that we have to embrace our children, we have to love them and just never, ever stop pushing them to be the best that they can be. (Applause.)

And it's also quite an honor to be here and to be able to share this with my son. We started out as a father and son team, about 10 years ago, he was six years old, and we had no idea that we would ever be in such an audience and such a place. And I'd like to introduce him and have him say a few things. Edwin, stand up. (Applause.)

EDWIN SPEAKER: It's truly an honor to be here, to speak in front of the First Lady, and even to see the President is a real honor. And me and my dad, we're like a normal family. We don't see it as doing different things, we just do it as normal. Like me being involved in the Boys and Girls Club helped a lot. I have a lot of mentors, they taught me a lot of different things. I was in a lot of different programs.

And I think if it wasn't for my dad, where would I be? Because like I said, it takes a man to raise a man. (Applause.) I mean, I give credit to my mom, too, but I owe it most to my dad. He took me fishing. We used to go out to the ball game. He was involved in a lot of programs in the club. It's because of that, that I think I'm here today. I just owe most of the credit to him. That's all I have to say. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Laura Stepps' book talks a lot about the question that she poses: Am I competent? -- is a child competent to do something and feel good about himself. And, certainly, Edd and Edwin are examples for all of us who know that there are challenges that have to be overcome in everyone's life.

But seeking that commitment to overcome them and create that competence -- and I like Laura's three R's of respect, responsibility and relationship -- but I think you summed it very well, Mr. Speaker, when you talked about show me, not tell me. And there really is not any substitute for that.

And I think partly because of time pressures and because we are living in such a non-stop, talky culture where people are just talking at us and sometimes you turn on TV, they're yelling at us -- people think that talk substitutes for action, and that as long as you're a good talker, it doesn't really matter what else you do. And that has permeated our culture.

So the idea, the slogan, "show me, don't tell me," that's the way you build competence. You can tell somebody something over and over again, but only by showing them and exemplifying the characteristics you want do you really have a chance of creating the sort of person that you hope to have.

Now, our next speaker, Dr. Robert Blum, is the Director of the Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health at the University of Minnesota, and is a co-investigator for the seminal national longitudinal study on adolescent health known as ADD Health.

This important research holds very significant information about the influence of social factors and connections to the health of teenagers. And I think it's important that we know what this research is demonstrating, because sometimes your experience may not be enough; you may feel somewhat doubtful about your own experience, or even about what somebody else tells you. But backing up that experience with the research may help to, I hope, change some people's minds about what we need to do. Dr. Blum?

DR. BLUM: Thank you very much. Mrs. Clinton, I wasn't going to comment, but you raised the issue before about chores. And there actually has been research, and we've done some of the work with kids with disabilities. And what we found is that chores, having responsibilities, is a non-verbal message that you matter in my family. And kids who don't have chores get the message, you don't count.

I'd like to structure my comments, based on ADD Health, around four myths. Myth number one: Families don't matter. By the time we reach adolescence, it's all in the genes -- spell it whichever way -- (laughter) -- or peers.

What do we know? We know that families in fact do matter, and continue to matter throughout the teenage years. In the original analyses of ADD Health, family connectedness was associated with delay in sexual debut, less cigarette smoking, less alcohol use, less emotional distress and suicidality, and less violence. We have also found that adolescent perceptions, what kids believe -- particularly about maternal disapproval of sex -- are associated with delay of first intercourse. Parents' perceptions, on the other hand -- what mom says she believes -- has no such association with delay of first intercourse.

What influences perception? Perceptions don't seem to be influenced by the amount of talk. They seem to be influenced, as we have seen this morning, by the interaction of caring and connectedness, on the one hand, and clear and consistent messages.

Myth number two: parents need to be home after school to monitor their kids more. There's value to being home after school. But what we know is that monitoring without connectedness has little associated protective effect. Where it does, it's mostly with older teenagers, and it's limited to certain substance abuse.

Likewise, while there are less health-risk behaviors found in teenagers whose parents are home more times during the day -- at breakfast, after school, dinner, and at bedtime -- there are no magical times of the day. And after school is no more magical than any other time.

Myth number three: Do things with your kids. You know, take your kid hunting and you won't have to go hunting for you kid. And Edwin, as much as your dad took you to ball games, I don't think that was the answer.

Doing activities with parents by itself is associated with very little risk reduction. Going shopping, tossing a football, does not create connectedness. Psychological availability does. The key is giving a young person the consistent message that they're crazy about them. Yuri Bronfman-Brenner said, every kid needs someone who's crazy about them.

Myth number four: The real issue is family divorce. I was in the House Ways and Means Committee office antechamber, and there was a big poster. With a red light, it said, "Stop juvenile violence." And a green light, it said, "Start two-parent families." Would that we could.

But underlying this is the assumption that the answer is two-parent families, and the problem is single parents. What do we know? Well, young people who come from single-parent families are more likely than others to be involved in every risk behavior. The vast majority of these young people are not involved. Additionally, and importantly, coming from a single-parent family explains less than two percent of alcohol use; less than two percent of weapon-related violence; very little suicide risk at all; very little difference between those who have had early sexual involvement. Clearly, things other than the family is going on.

What matters? For violence risk, what we see from ADD Health: school failure, victimization -- and Dr. Diaz spoke to that -- future plans, friends drinking, friends' suicide or suicide attempts, and access to weapons at home all are associated with violence risk.

For substance abuse: temperament, early physical maturation, peer drug use, parent smoking, parent drug use.

For suicide attempts, factors that increase risk include poor school performance, sexual victimization and low self-esteem. For every group, when we looked at suicide attempt, family connectedness clearly reduced suicide risk, no matter what else was going on.

For sexual relations, whether you're male or female, black, white, Hispanic, being in a relationship greatly increases your risk of early sexual intercourse. As opportunities increase, not surprisingly, so does the likelihood of sexual intercourse. On the other hand, those young people who see pregnancy as having a high personal cost -- for their reputation, for themselves, for their future -- are much more likely to delay intercourse.

What can we conclude? When we look at the factors that place young people at risk for a range of what Lee Shore (pho.) calls "crummy outcomes," we consistently see school failure as part of the picture. School failure is a public health problem for youth. (Applause.)

It is influenced in part by parental attitudes towards school. Parents who highly value school have kids who are much more connected with school, and it is very protective. So, too, family connectedness is strongly associated with school connectedness. And these, family and school, are the two major institutions in the lives of young people.

Families matter. But only in connection with school, with church, with other community institutions can they be successful. Parents can't do it alone, and we should stop expecting them to. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: You know, clearly from Dr. Blum's comments, the whole issue of connectedness, and the psychological availability that parents have to their children, is becoming a theme of today's conference. But I think it's often difficult for parents to translate that into what they're supposed to do every day, because each of us inherits, both perhaps biological and environmental, our own ability to be psychologically available, our own openness, our upbringing influences, how we relate to our children.

So are there ways that we can help parents know what that means? Because for the people who might be watching this or reading about it, Laura writes about all these parents, and I'm reading her book. You know, every one of them wakes up in the morning trying to do what she or he thinks is best for the child or children in that family.

There are very few parents -- I mean, there are some -- but there are very few parents who deliberately set out to undermine their child's competence, destroy the connectivity, and create a child who is at risk of failure or who has one of the problems we're talking about. So before we go on to the next speaker, I'd like to ask three panelists who have already spoken,

perhaps, to just say a word: how do you become better connected? How do you become psychologically available?

And Dr. Blum, what I basically heard you say is that -- and Mr. Speaker said the same thing -- that one of the reasons you network and you find other adults who are responsible to be part of your children's lives is to make up for your own deficits. You may recognize things about yourself that you may try to work on, but you're not going to be the best, most available parent there is. So you try to find a Challengers Boys and Girls Club. You encourage your child to be active in a religious activity, or something like that. Is that one of the answers? Laura?

MS. SESSIONS STEPP: It certainly is. Another thing is that I think you can plug into their world. Ms. Perlman mentioned not going to Limp Bizkit concerts, so I'm not saying we all have to listen to, God help us, Limp Bizkit. But it is important to know who Limp Bizkit is, and to have listened to some of those Cds, so that you know what it is your child is listening to, and you have that basis for conversation when they're ready to talk to you about it. So there are ways to sort of be on the edge of your child's life, but still be connected to the center.

DR. BLUM: We went and spoke with young people and said, how do you know when your parents are connected? And they had wonderful and clear examples. A note on the refrigerator that says, Jimmy, I'm going to be home late from work today. There's a sandwich in the refrigerator for you. I'll be back at 5:00 p.m. A phone call from work after school to say, how did your day go? I'm going to be tied up. Being there when I come home at night.

My father, who knows the name of the guy that I went out with, and doesn't say, how was the date that you had with What's-his-name? My mother who remembers that I had a math test last Thursday and said, how did you do on that math test, and didn't forget about it. All of those things say, you count.

MRS. CLINTON: Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Well, just to kind of piggyback on what Dr. Blum is saying, I think that certainly these are things that give an indication that you do count. And they are things that I, as a parent, try to practice, by being involved and knowing exactly where Edwin is and what he's doing, and knowing times -- there are times, again, it looks like he's reading my mind, because there are times when I'm not going to be home that I'll leave some money on the table and say, you know, get you something to eat. I'll be a little late, and then I'll call and make sure where he is. And I'll try to keep track of his social development, where he goes, who he's with, who he's seeing.

And I think that he probably thinks that I'm kind of overprotective, but there are just so many things that are happening out there. And I've tried to stay on top of it at all times. I think it's important in the development of our kids that we're there and we know -- we've got to know what's going on, whether they like it or not. And it can be done from a positive stance, by just saying, yes, I care. I want to know. I want to know who this guy is. Who are his parents? What do they do? It's just a thing that you have to do.

MRS. CLINTON: I really appreciate that, because I think we want to send some strong messages today, but we don't want people to feel sort of helpless about how they can translate all of this experience and advice into sort of day-by-day activities. And as I was listening, I was remembering a conversation that I once had with a friend of mine, Janet Hill, who is the mother of Grant Hill and the wife of Calvin Hill. And they led very busy lives, but they just had hard and fast rules about staying in contact.

And Janet used to tell me that she had a set time every day, if she wasn't going to be available physically, to call and talk with Grant. So even if she was on the other side of the world, at 3:00 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. -- I can't remember what time it was exactly -- she'd set the alarm clock, she'd wake herself up, she'd call. She would make sure he knew she was thinking about him, so that the psychological availability, which creates the psychological space, which is really where we conduct most of our lives together, was always available. And I think that that's something that anyone, even a busy parent, if they're constantly thinking about their child and reaching out, can try to manage to do.

Our next speaker who is in the audience today is one of our nation's leading authorities on work and family issues. Ellen Galinsky is the cofounder and president of the Families and Work Institute, which conducts pioneering studies on the ways that job and home life inter-relate. And her recent book, "Ask The Children," challenged some of the conventional wisdom about children's views of their parents' work.

And Ellen has really been a pioneer in making all of us stop and think about some of those issues. And I remember so well when I was a young lawyer working how there were rules in a lot of the places, not only that I represented and visited, that you could not make personal phone calls.

And around 2:30 p.m., 3:00 p.m., 3:30 p.m., every afternoon, you'd see all the women who worked in those offices sneaking around to call their children, to make sure that their children got picked up, that they got home, that they were taken care of. How much better it would be if offices said, look, we need you to be a good employee and one of the ways we're going to do that is by supporting you in being a good parent; so for goodness' sake, you've got permission to call and find out whether your child is home safely.

It's those little things that make a big difference, because they undermine this psychological availability. And I think there are a lot of parents who are caught in a double-bind, who feel that they can't express at work what they need to in terms of staying in touch with and connected with their children. So, Ellen, will you tell us what employers can do to help their employees who parent teenage children to be better at that important job.

MS. GALINSKY: I'd like to point out a trend in this conference that we haven't talked very much about, before I address your question. And that is, we've all talked about the fact that this conference is bringing us a new view of parenting a teenager; it's not just the problems, but we're looking at the promise, the potential of young people.

But the other thing that we're doing that is unusual and I do think is a part of a trend, is that we're listening to children. We're not just talking about children and communicating within families; but we as a society have brought children here and we're listening to children -- it changed the book that you've written, it has changed the way you parented, and so forth.

So I did the same thing in thinking about how to answer your question. I looked at what children say they need. And the answers won't be particularly surprising, but -- I think, actually, they are surprising -- but I think that they're very important.

The first is, and we've talked about it, the importance of flexibility of time, that the amount of time is not necessarily so important as having flexibility in time. And it's not just little children who need that. When I looked at whether children felt that they had enough time with their parents, it was older children, more so than younger children, who were yearning for time with their parents. One in four companies provide flexibility on a daily basis for parents.

The second issue is -- and I think Mrs. Clinton just talked about this -- is having support that's without jeopardy, that you don't have to sneak around to make a phone call. And it's important that be true for mothers as well as for fathers. I found when I asked the children, for example, what was important to them, they were particularly yearning for more time with their dads, even a bit more so than their moms. So we need to make sure that when we think of employer supports at the workplace that we're thinking of fathers, as well as thinking of mothers.

We've been talking about the importance of networks and support. And the workplace is a very important place to have that happen. A recent study that I just did of kids, I found that 80 percent of them said that their mothers worked most of the time that they were growing up; and 86 percent of them said that their fathers worked most of the time when they were growing up, so the workplace is an important place that can provide support for families and to help parents navigate, as you say, those tough moments in being a parent.

I asked kids, for example, what are some of the most important things that they can do, and they talked about the importance of being able to talk to them. They said -- one 14-year-old, don't be afraid to talk to your kids. They may act like they don't want to, but talking to them is great, and they want you to whether you think they want to or not. So help at the workplace with how do you talk to kids. And in fact, I once did a seminar when I brought in a group of teenagers to talk to the corporate audience about when does it work in talking to your kids, and when is it a disaster, and what differentiates those two things.

The other thing we've been talking about all morning, too, which is that the small moments make a big difference. When I asked children what they would most remember from this period in their childhood, it was those small moments, those everyday moments -- the song that you sing when you wake up your kid; the note on the refrigerator that you're coming home -- that make the biggest difference. And we can get that kind of support and we can learn those little tricks from each other at the workplace, particularly since so much of us spend so much time there.

The fourth suggestion that I have also comes from kids. When I ask children if they had one wish and I just gave them one wish for what they would change to change the way their mother's or their father's work affects their lives, children said that they wished that their parents were less stressed and less tired. And that's an issue that we've skirted around the edges of all day. It's a surprise -- only two percent of parents guessed that their kids would say that, by the way.

Work is becoming more demanding. But interestingly enough, I also found that when parents have good jobs -- and that means that they're reasonably demanding, that means that they have some autonomy in their job, that means that they don't have to pretend that they don't have a life outside of work at the workplace, that their supervisors are supportive, things like that, they not only come home less stressed, which I think has health repercussions, but they also have more energy for their kids. But, I think importantly, they go back to work ready to invest that in the workplace. So it's not a win-lose, it's not an either/or situation the way we think it is. A good workplace can lead to better parenting and lead to better workers at the workplace.

Now, unfortunately, only 12 percent of employers are doing something specifically to help parents of teenagers. So I hope that this conference will be the clarion call that helps this be the next frontier for the workplace. Thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: You know, Ellen's contribution to this is so important, because for a long time, our national dialogue about work and family has focused mostly on young children -- how do we provide child care for the preschooler, how do we take care of the third- and fourth-grader who is going to get out of school and has nowhere to go.

But we now know how important it is that parents have these flexible times and these moments and this support in parenting their teenagers as well. And I really appreciate Ellen's leadership in this effort.

Another area where parents are asking for help is monitoring their teens' television and Internet and video game and music usage. And as I said earlier, I really think we need a voluntary, uniform rating system that will tell all parents in a simple and consistent way whether the material their children wish to view is appropriate.

But until we have such a system in place, we at least have a variety of ratings that we can rely on, but a lot of parents don't even know about those ratings and find them confusing and, therefore, unhelpful, and in addition, don't know how to use the V-chip, either.

Now, as we know from the poll that was released this morning, parents think they are supervising their children's Internet usage. But I don't think it will surprise any of us that their teenage children tell a very different story. They don't think they're being supervised at all, and if they have parents like me, they don't think that their parents could supervise what they're doing, so they feel pretty much unsupervised. I'm hopeful that the Task Force on Tools for Parents and Teens in the Media Age will help address this important point.

Our next speaker from the audience will speak about the responsibility of the media and entertainment industry to develop these tools for parents so that parents can better understand and monitor the new media.

Judith McHale is the President and Chief Operating Officer of Discovery Communications and Chair of the Board of The National Campaign to End Youth Violence. She has been a terrific bridge between the world of family and work, between the public and the private sectors. I can't thank her enough for the leadership she's given on so many important issues.

And we've asked her to share her views regarding the role of the media. Judith?

MS. MCHALE: Thank you, Mrs. Clinton, and thank you for hosting this amazing conference. As a mother of a teenager, I'm taking copious notes as we go through it. You speak about the role of media and the responsibility of the media. One of the sort of trends I hear through this is communication and the importance of communication with your teenagers.

At the same time, when we are being bombarded with changes in media, the technological changes around the world are absolutely stunning, and the choices that our children have to make every day, the images all of us are constantly being hit with I think are creating huge, huge obstacles to those moments of communication. And what should we and what should our role in the media be as we look at it.

I think one of the things that I sort of tried to, as I've stepped back and looked at it is this question of -- you probably can't shield them from everything that's going on; that would be an impossible task. But why not take steps to harness the incredible potential power of all of this sort of information that's going around and use it in good and positive ways.

Now, that's easier said than done for most parents. Mrs. Clinton, you alluded to how difficult it is to monitor your kids' behavior, and I would say there's nothing more -- no more humbling experience than I had this morning, standing behind my 11-year-old, helping me to -- my way through a computer. I think we have a different kind of digital divide going on between techno-savvy kids and their parents. So it makes it very, very difficult for you to understand all that's going on. And, frankly, I think it's frightening for a lot of us.

When you sort of see that your 11-year-old or your 17-year-old is far more sophisticated than you are in wending and navigating their way through this new world, how, indeed, are you going to be able to help them out. And I think we in the media have a responsibility to help develop tools and communicate tools to parents and to others to do that, to parents to provide them with the resources that they need to understand the information that is flowing into their homes or into their schools that their kids are dealing with.

I think someone -- Mrs. Clinton, you might have mentioned earlier, to get that wise site on the Internet with helps parents understand the kinds of resources that are out there and guides for the kids. I think tools for families to help them share some of these experiences together --

we've -- Discovery launched our Internet site and we kept in mind families and tried to develop a tool that would allow families together to explore the net.

But most importantly, I think we need to develop tools for kids, with kids, to help them understand the messages that they are receiving in all these new ways. We spend hundreds of hours in schools, year after year, helping kids interpret the written word, but we've done very little to this point to help them interpret electronic media and the messages that they're getting from a variety of other ways.

One of the things that I've been trying to do -- and we've developed a program at Discovery which, last week, I announced we were going to take into every school in the state of Maryland, a media literacy program, which is absolutely designed to help kids understand the messages that they're getting over television, through the net, what have you.

And last year, when we launched -- started looking into this program, I took it into some schools in Maryland myself and went around to see them, and at every level, it was one of the things that the kids really wanted. And it was amazing -- we went to a high school in Bethesda and it was with a sort of fear and intrepidation, launching a new program there in front of 500 kids in high school. And we went through the whole program, it's highly interactive, where they can really see the news, see sports events, how they are portrayed on television, and begin to interpret it. And at the end of it -- we ended early -- one of my favorite anecdotes was, the principal at the school said, okay, why don't you guys give us your feedback. I was totally terrified that when you're dealing with kids this age, what were they going to say about this boring message.

And I always remember one kid stood up and I would say he was about 16 or 17, and sort of had a scarf on his head. And he looked at me and he said, you know -- he goes, this was really cool. And which, obviously, as the mother of a teenager, knew this was high praise -- and he goes, of course, you've ruined television for me, but that's okay, this is really cool. And you found the kids wanting to be totally engaged in this process, to really understand. When you are able to explain to them the impact of violence on them -- I go back to your brain research -- when they understood the impact of some of the football images that they received, or baseball, or the more violent images or even sitcoms, the editorial choices that people were making, they felt empowered. And I think in the media, we have a responsibility to take those steps to empower kids, to understand the messages that we're receiving, to understand what's real, what's make-believe, and in the end, to understand what's right and wrong. Thank you. (Applause.)

I think Judith's point is especially important, because one of the challenges that we face is helping our children understand what the media messages are and what the advertising messages are, and to sort of deconstruct that, if you will, so that they are less influenced by them. You know, to see sort of what the motives behind a lot of advertising are, and not to be taken in or taken advantage of.

Because one of the concerns we hear a lot about is the way young people are both depicted in the media and the way young people are increasingly viewed not as future citizens, not as individual human beings with promise and potential, but as consumers, and therefore, as

manipulable objects that can be driven in one direction or another to achieve certain commercial ends.

And we see how the unrealistic images of women and girls inspire unhealthy dieting and eating disorders, we see the racial and ethnic stereotypes that are still such a part of our media, we see how common, gratuitous sex and violence are and we know that this steady diet of media images, even if we believe we are strong enough to sort them out and stand against them, send messages and affect the way people view themselves and others.

Now, our next speaker, also in our audience, has studied these issues and drawn some interesting conclusions about the implications of media's depiction of teens.

Susan Bales is the President of Frameworks Institute, a project of the College-University Resource Institute, which conducts communications research on social issues. And I'd like to ask if Susan Bales would tell us: Is there a danger in the media's portrayal of young people today and what we can do about that.

MS. BALES: Thank you, Mrs. Clinton, friends and colleagues. I think there is a serious distortion in the way that the media presents youth today. And while we talk a lot about its consequences on youth, I think we're less aware about its consequences upon us as adults -- first, as parents in the way that we view our child's peer group and teens in general, but secondarily -- and I think even as important -- is in the way that we view ourselves as citizens and make decisions about priorities for public spending.

So I want to talk just a little bit about the research we've conducted for the last year with funding from the W.T. Grant Foundation. Looking at survey research, we see that adults believe that teens today are different than they were in the past. Only one in six adults will tell you that teens today share their moral and ethical values.

When asked what descriptors they would use to describe teens today, they're more likely to talk about materialistic and selfish teens. If you ask what they would have described teens 20 years ago, those words were more like patriotic and idealistic.

The reality, as we know, is the reality that we've talked about here today. When you ask kids what values they hold to be important, they will tell you that it's honesty and hard work, it's performance in school, and it's giving and helping others. And yet, if you present adults, parents with information about what kids are actually doing in the world, that they're volunteering, that they are attending cultural events, that they are succeeding in school, it is the rare parent that will believe these statistics.

What accounts, then, for something so powerful that it trumps our own view of reality? My friend, Catherine Hinds Knowles (pho.), who is here in the audience, says that television is a great cultural storyteller, and that we get a lot of the information that we have about the other from television.

In a review that she just did for us of the fall evening entertainment lineup and its presentation of youth, Catie found a world that sounds entirely disconnected from the world that we've described here today. She found that TV teens are entirely disconnected from their communities. In fact, they're disconnected from their parents. Parents are often shown as -- if they're shown -- uninvolved, ineffective, often they cause problems that teens must solve. The teens solve those problems in conjunction with their peer group, and the problems that they solve are often trivial and social in nature.

On the news side, a recent study from the Berkeley Media Studies Group showed that there are two issues that dominate in television news as it affects youth: Crime and education. And those have equal prominence in print coverage. So if you think about it, we are showing violence as a presence in our children's lives to the same degree that we are showing violence and crime.

The writer, Richard Rodriguez has said that the stories invent us. I think what we are seeing in the way that we view both television, news and entertainment, is that we're making some false risk assessments. We are being told that a good parent is one who protects his or her adolescent from the community at exactly the time that experts in this room would tell us that our adolescents need to be acculturated into the community.

That also has consequences for us in that the more that teenagers are removed from the community, the less actual contact we have with them, and the more likely we are to believe these false images of today's youth.

I think we need a different kind of television, news and entertainment. We need to see more kids working in soup kitchens, doing performance arts, on track for achievement, and we need to see them in ways that allow us to believe the regularity of their lives, not the dissimilarities.

I think that we need to tell ourselves a new story about youth in America today, and that unless we are able to tell ourselves a new story, we are more likely to make very bad public pronouncements and public judgments. And those judgments are more likely to go in the direction of incarceration, metal detectors and remedial decisions about children's lives, instead of positive promotion. Thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Susan, before you sit down, could I ask you to respond? As I travel around and meet with a lot of parents and others, I cannot tell you how many adults, and particularly parents, are so emotionally disturbed by this constant diet of youth violence that the news feeds. And of course, we've had some terrible, tragic incidents that have broken through national consciousness, and they are living in such a state of fear about their own children.

And because their sense of perception is at variance with their everyday reality, how does one in my position, your position, any of our positions, how do you respond? Because if you say, but you know, the statistics are that youth homicide and suicide are going down, thankfully, that the vast majority of kids are really doing a good job with their lives, that is so at variance with the story we've been told that people don't believe it. How do you move us from the story

we are currently being told and, therefore, telling, to a more realistic story that will give people more of a sense of hope and empowerment over their own lives?

MS. BALES: I think it's a really important question and I think as researchers -- our innate tendency is to confront people with the facts, and what we know from the cognitive sciences is that if the facts don't fit the frame of references, it's the facts that are going to go, not the frame of reference.

Karen Pittman and I were talking about this before we walked in. We have to tell a complete story to the American public and to each other. It's not a little fact here, a little fact there. It's a narrative. It's a story about children's lives. And you can't do a focus group with Americans today without them telling you we want to see solutions and we want to see programs that work.

Everyone in this audience knows hundreds of programs that work. They are absolutely invisible in news, and the notion that kids are involved in programs is invisible on entertainment. So those are the stories I think that we have to surface that allow us to make sense of these positive statistics.

MRS. CLINTON: I'm really glad you have sort of put that on our agenda for the conference because I think it may be one of the most important -- in addition to giving parents hope and tools and ideas about connectivity, in a very practical way, this creation of a new, more accurate story that runs counter to the hysteria and the images and the stereotypes, which really paralyzes people -- because if you think nothing works, then why do you invest in anything, because it won't work anyway, so why go to the trouble of putting that after-school program in your school, or lowering class size to make the school experience more intimate, and all the things that could make a difference in the lives of kids.

And it's one of the biggest problems those of us who are in the public arena face because you come forward with solutions like this, and so often the louder voices are the punitive, anti-kid, don't invest because it won't work, kind of stories. And it's difficult to find a way to make it a more realistic view, as you're advocating. So I hope you'll write out that narrative with your colleagues and share it with us.

One of the reasons that the media can have such a great influence on how adults think about young people is that many adults no longer have any contact with a young person. A majority of adults have no personal interaction with teenagers whatsoever. We have disconnected the lives of teenagers from the lives of the majority of adults in our society.

If you live in a retirement community, part of the reason you live there is so you never have to see anybody who is below a certain age. If you live in a gated community, if you go the same way to work every day and you're in the same environment, and you don't have teenagers, you're not involved in your community, and you don't even have sidewalks anymore in your towns or cities to walk down, or you think it's too dangerous to walk down the ones that are there -- you're not going to have that kind of interaction, and you, therefore, are prone to believe the stories that paint the worst possible picture of our young people.

Now, in contrast, our next speaker has given his life over to helping the children in his community succeed. Geoff Canada is the President and CEO of the Rheedlan Centers for Children and Families, and the author of *Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun*, a personal history of violence in America. You know, Geoff is also a hero to many for his groundbreaking work in Harlem, and he's here to tell us about what we can do to create more of those connections, and especially how we can use community organizations to help children who live in destitute and particularly disadvantaged circumstances.

Please welcome Geoff Canada. (Applause.)

MR. CANADA: Thank you very much. I think that we have to come to grips that in America right now we have communities that some of us wouldn't drive through. We have communities where people literally fear for their lives when they go into those communities and it's the kind of places we tell our children they can't go to.

There are people living in those communities; there are families raising their children. They are struggling. When I talk to families in those communities about their hopes for their children, their first hope is that their child will be alive and will stay safe. And this is a very concrete thing. Even with the good message that things are better for lots of children and lots of communities, there are still targeted communities in this country where things are not really good for their children.

I think that we have to really figure out how we begin to work with communities that are failing. When the community itself is a threat, and a parent has real reasons to doubt that their child can move safely from home to school, from school to anyplace after school -- the playgrounds aren't working, the institutions of faith aren't working in those communities. The civic organizations, the block associations, the tenant associations -- they're not functioning. You don't have adults involved in Little Leagues. How do we expect children to flourish in those kinds of conditions. And those are the kinds of conditions lots of our children are growing up in and our families are struggling with.

We think -- and one of the things we started to do at the Rheedlan Centers for Children and Families is really just carve out an area for us. And it's the right size for us; it's 23 blocks in central Harlem, and we started something called the Harlem Children's Zone. And the idea is to work with all of the children and institutions in that community to really bring everybody together around a consensus that children are first. No matter what else you do, let's figure out how we put children first.

So we start with what we know that works. And this is not rocket science. We know all of the brain development work from zero to 3, and so we have something called a baby college where we make it accessible to all of the children and all of the infants in that area. We know about good nutrition and well-baby check-ups for expecting parents, and we make sure our parents get those. We're in the public schools. We have a terrific AmeriCorps program.

We believe in bringing these young people -- what energy, what creativity -- the very young people who are doing terrific in these environments are the ones who can give a message of hope to these other elementary school young people in a way that none of us, with this salt-and-pepper hair -- could ever do for young people. It matters tremendously that young people feel they are part of the solution.

You know, what happens is young people get such a sense of despair. Here they have all this youth and vitality, and everything suggests that you're not going to make it. Well, don't they want to get out there and show folks we are going to make it and we're going to lead this charge. One of the things that AmeriCorps does for us is it allows us to get these volunteers, get them well-trained, place them in those public schools, teach young people how to stay safe, how to deal with conflict. Young people want to remain safe. Their parents want to get involved. We think that's a critical part of this work.

Then we go right into the adolescence. You know, the one thing we do in our adolescent program is to make sure our young people can tell their own stories. We have a newspaper called Harlem Overheard that young people produce. It has a 25,000 person circulation, and it really tells it from their point of view what they're dealing with.

We have a radio show and a TV show called The Real Deal, where young people are the ones who actually put on -- they produce the show and they put on the show, and again, it tells their story. We find so many of our young people are filled with such a rage that no one knows what's going on, no one understands their condition, and they have no one to tell their side of things. When they hear about what's going on, they can't figure out a way to say, no, this is how we really feel. Giving young people a voice is absolutely critical. And especially in those teen years, when they have a real view on -- you know, young people are very sophisticated, and often we don't give them a means to sort of tell us in their very sophisticated ways what they think, with enough time. You give a young person 700-800 words to tell a story, they've got enough time to really give a point of view. And we think that's absolutely critical.

The idea is to rebuild a sense of community. And we're not the only ones doing this. People are doing this across the country. Some of the folks in this room are doing that. We think that we've got to really put a new emphasis on building community and making sure our young people know that we, as the elders in that community, are part of a community-building venture, with them as partners, that respect their talent and their energy, but really gives them the kinds of resources that we think young people need in order to do it.

And let me just say the last thing, which is I think the young people are watching us very closely for signals about whether or not we're serious about their development and their care. And I had this whole conversation with young people around summer youth employment. Boy, was that a whole issue. And they kept asking me, why doesn't this nation want us to work? What is wrong with young people having jobs in the summer? Why, if we've got billions and billions of dollars of surplus -- (applause) -- you know, this is, I think, our nation at its most cynical. And I just think that we've got to watch the messages we give to young people.

They're watching us. Sometimes people think things happen here and no one is really paying attention. And young people are saying, well, we don't understand, if they're really serious about us working and being productive and staying out of trouble this summer, how come they're not supporting us. I think we've got to really think about how we give young people messages.

This is particularly a time -- you know, the only bad thing about having such a surplus in this nation is everybody is trying to figure out what are your priorities, and where do we fit in. And we've done some terrific things in moving toward health care for young people. And I know the role that you and the President have paid in that. And also looking at after-school, and there are lots of folks who supported that. But there's lots of unfinished business in this country that I think we need to give young people a message about how we feel about them that allows them to say, you know what, they really are with us and they're rooting for us and they're giving us what we need to succeed. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: I really hope even more people will find out what Geoff and his colleagues are doing because it's really a comprehensive effort to make sure that young people have both the services they need, but also the support -- the personal support, so that they feel that they are partners in this venture of community building.

And I commend you for using AmeriCorps so creatively. AmeriCorps, as the President said in the very beginning, was created just five years ago, but more than 150,000 Americans have served in AmeriCorps. And I hope that we'll be increasing those numbers, because most of them are involved in serving young people -- in mentoring, in tutoring, in organizing.

And Geoff mentioned a particularly important issue, and that's after-school and summer jobs -- to go back to Laura's point about respect, responsibility and relationship. Responsibility is a key to that. And, in fact, four out of five young people do hold a job at one time or another while they are in school. And we need to do more to provide those kinds of opportunities.

And I'd like to ask Harvard anthropologist Katherine Newman, who has studied the experience of low-wage workers in low-income communities, to talk with us for a minute on this. Her book is entitled, No Shame In My Game. And I think all of us can look more at what can be done by employers and levels of government to provide those opportunities so that kids have more sense of success for their future.

Dr. Newman.

DR. NEWMAN: Thank you, Mrs. Clinton. I want to thank Geoff Canada for raising the crucial issue of work. It's not something we talk about very much when we think about teenagers. We think about parents, we think about communities, religious institutions, but we don't talk about the world of work because we think that's what adults do, not what teenagers do.

But I want to argue in this conference that that's a big mistake. The nation's teenagers are at work, and we need to devote some attention to what they get out of it, because the sheer size of the teenage labor force really commends us to think about it. Over half of the nation's

teenagers, 16-19, are in the United States labor force. The proportion of American teens who work has increased over the last decade. About a third of the nation's teenagers work more than 35 hours a week. And their wages have risen steadily over the last 20 years.

About one in six teenage workers earned the minimum wage in 1999, but less than 2 percent of those teenage workers received the earned income tax credit, which is primarily targeted at families, and most 16-19-year-olds don't have families yet.

Work opportunity is crucial for the well-being of teenagers, especially in the neighborhoods that Geoff Canada was talking about. Their parents need them to help provide support for the households they live in. We're not talking about gold chains and sneakers here. We're talking about central contributions that teenagers make, especially to the support of poor households. They are expected to help provide for their own school expenses, for their transportation, for their books, for the tuition they pay at junior colleges in communities like Harlem. They help their parents pay for the phone bill, for the furniture they sit on, for the utilities they consume.

This pattern of teenage contribution to family well-being will not surprise anyone who either lived through, remembers, or read about the Great Depression. Because that's what teenagers did during the Great Depression, and that's what they still do in the nation's poor communities.

Now, some researchers have suggested that working is bad for teenagers because it distracts their attention from schooling. And of course, this can be the case if teenagers work too many hours. And for middle class kids, like my children, who have many, many resources, the choice to focus exclusively on school is probably quite sensible, but it's also a luxury. It's a luxury my children have to focus just on school.

Teenagers from Mr. Canada's neighborhood often find that that choice is foreclosed to them. But are these teens harmed by working? My research in central Harlem also suggests not. The structure, the discipline, the mentoring that they receive in the workplace spilled back into the schoolyard and the classroom and helps them perform better in school. It's in the workplace that employers teach them how to manage their time, how to be responsible to others, how to display and perform motivation. Those workplace lessons surface in the classroom. And the Harlem teenagers that I studied report consistently that their school performance went up when they got a job, not down.

Kids who were poised to drop out didn't, and they didn't because there were employers and managers and older workers looking over their shoulders, paying attention to how they were doing in school. And sometimes in communities that have a lot of disorganized lives around them, those adults, those employers are the only adults who are paying attention to the performance of poor teenagers who work in school. They keep after those teens, they monitor their report cards, they give them financial bonuses when they get good grades, they help them pay for their junior college tuition.

And I might add, this is a contribution employers make that goes largely unrecognized, and we should never discount the importance of civic recognition in helping employers to do the right thing by their teenagers. So if we are looking for a supply of mentors in the United States, we might think about employers as a very good source. They're not social workers, they're not charity workers, but they do an enormous amount to help youth over developmental hurdles in the course of making a living. And we ought to thank them for it.

And while we're at it -- and this is the last point I'd like to make -- I think we should recognize that it's in the work world that teenagers from all kinds of backgrounds in the United States learn about core American values. That great American mainstream out there values work and employment above any other source of honor and civic identity. And it's in the workplace that teenagers, especially those from poor and disadvantaged communities, learn the great value of being part of that mainstream. So to deny them that opportunity is to deny them access to that very central mainstream identity that they achieve in the workplace.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: In a few minutes we're going to be saying good-bye to all of the people who are participating in this conference by the satellite link. And I'm very grateful to all of them who have taken place. I hope that they will continue these discussions, and I hope that they will look for ways that they can improve the lives of their teens and their local communities.

One of the people that we want to hear from is a young woman who knows firsthand how service and being actively involved in her community has made a difference. Gabriella Contreras is only 14, but she's been setting examples for others since she was a tiny child. She came to us through Secretary Donna Shalala's Girl Power Project, which is a national campaign to encourage girls, age 9-14, to make the most of their lives.

And, Gabriella, I hope you will tell us what young people can do to help themselves and their peers.

MS. CONTRERAS: Okay. Well, I bet you're all wondering what kind of girl power a 14-year-old has. My attitude is to motivate. Relating my personal experiences, you may realize kids don't have to be limited by their age. Allowing youth to volunteer at a young age, as we get older, we learn to be concerned, solve problems in our community.

At the age of five, I began volunteering at the elderly care home my mom, Grace Contreras, owned and managed at that time. I visited and played my violin, and I was accepted by these people there.

Recently I asked myself a very important question -- these years of our youth, are they a curse or a blessing? (Laughter.) It may be funny, but in my opinion, as youth we have the opportunities to have fun going to the movies, shopping, hanging out with our friends, and also taking on the role of questioning how things are done, searching deep within ourselves, stepping beyond the demands of homework, after-school activities with our free time, get involved, take a stand and speak up as a positive peer.

I admit it is not easy being a youth if the negative peer pressure is very evident. At the age of 9, in the 3rd grade, I moved to a new school, Ross Ridge (phonetic) Elementary Middle Magnet School. There were a lot of riots at the high school across the street, and also high schools around the city at the time. The police and the SWAT team blocked off the street and they had to break up the gang fights that were happening there.

Seeing what was happening from our classroom windows, we were frightened, we were scared. I gathered my friends during our lunchtime and our lunch hour, and we made posters saying, Stop The Violence; Give Hugs, Not Drugs -- simple sayings.

Shouting as we marched along our school fence, facing the high school, I created a club that year, Club BAD, the Bealor Don't Do Drugs Club. I met with the school principal, Dr. Congroda (pho.) Gomez, he listened to my ideas, approved the club, and annual schoolwide peace marches, to kick off the school year in a positive way.

Today, the club members include K through 8th graders who are involved in volunteering and educational projects. The club is going strong into its sixth year now. As my mom, Grace Contreres (pho.) and my dad, Richard Contreres, even though they're divorced, continue to supervise the club, enabling youth to mentor youth.

I realize what a great amount of faith, belief, respect they have for us, even at our young age. In '97, I was invited as the Arizona youth delegate to the national summit called "America's Promise," it was alliance for youth pointing kids in the right direction. I met the co-chair, which I was very grateful I go to meet, General Colin Powell. I gave a speech on creative youth volunteerism.

My mom and I attended the breakout sessions. I learned the importance of the community youth-based organizations mentoring us youth. I asked my mom to help me organize a Tucson citywide youth summit. I called it "Great Resources for Youth." Tucson and all the students, the parents, businesspeople, city and state officials attended. Everyone valued and shared this information that we brought to them.

I'm currently on the National 4H, American Lung, Mayor's Council and Library of Congress youth boards, thanks to finding out there are such youth boards out there for us. Otherwise, I wouldn't have even known. Recently, a total of 33 youth were being arrested throughout Tucson for copycat Columbine threats. I'm sure we all remember that happening. I conducted a citywide peace march, like the annual schoolwide peace marches we have at our school. The entire city came together, supporting the school, holding banners saying, "Tucson stands for peace, si se puede por la paz," yes, we can have peace, safe schools, safe streets.

Well, I created a motto I share with my club and I leave with you now. And I hold it dearly to my heart as well: Even as youth, we can make a positive difference in our home, neighborhood, school and community.

In conclusion, I challenge adults to include us, encourage us, have faith in youth of all ages in our nation. How can we as youth make a difference? One important easy way: Volunteer with us to make a difference in our communities, enable us to have a voice by organizing schoolwide and citywide peace marches, or at the little, just get involved with our daily lives. Thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: I'd love for Gabriela's mother to stand up, and we can -- (applause) -- acknowledge you. Well, our final speaker is someone who spends all day every day with young people. We were talking before about how the majority of adults don't have any interconnection with young people. But Jay Engeln, who is a principal, in fact, the principal of the year, really is part of the adult community that cares deeply about young people.

I think it's important that we hear from someone such as he who is the Met Life National Association of Secondary Schools Principals Principal of the Year at the William J. Palmer High School in Colorado Springs. The high school has a slogan: Together, we can make a difference. And so, if you would, Mr. Engeln, if you would tell us what you recommend to schools so that they can make a difference.

MR. ENGELN: Thank you, Mrs. Clinton. I would like to begin with just a very brief story. In Washington last October, I had to give a speech to a large banquet, and it was supposed to be about 20 minutes. You can wing five minutes, but 20 minutes, you have to do a little bit of preparation, and things were not falling in place.

Until I took a tour of the President Roosevelt Memorial. And inscribed on the wall was a quote: "No country, however rich, can afford the waste of its human resources." Relevant in the Depression, but in the context of our young people, it's right on target today. And at that point, all the remarks that I was going to make just fell into place.

Youth are 24 percent of our population, but they are 100 percent of our future. They are our most valuable resource, an asset that we cannot afford to waste.

We do have a challenge in education, and that's to meet the educational needs of all students to prepare them to be successful in a rapidly changing world. But as Dr. Blum said earlier, parents can't do it alone, the schools can't do it alone, either. But working together, we can have an impact on the youth of this country.

As Mrs. Clinton stated, our motto at Palmer High School is, "Together, we can make a difference." And I truly feel this motto is the main reason for the renaissance of our school. Not too long ago, Palmer High School was discussed quite openly about being closed -- declining enrollment, test scores that were not where they should be, very transient population and decaying facilities.

But with all entities of the community coming together, parents, students, staff, community members and businesses, we have seen a major renaissance in this downtown school. Keep in mind, it's four buildings on three city blocks that are not adjacent to each other with major city streets intersecting our campus. So it's a unique location for a school.

Developing partnerships with families and parents is a concept whose time has come. Actively involving parents in their children's learning is essential. And as building administrators, teachers, we must be proactive in this endeavor. A lot of parents come to the schools for conferences, a lot of parents come to open houses, but there is a significant number of parents that do not come to the schools, for whatever reason. Maybe their last experience was not a good one. Maybe the last time they were at the school was because of a suspension. Or, maybe, when they were in school they were suspended. And we must connect with these parents if we're going to be successful and meet the needs of all kids.

I'd like to share with you four examples at Palmer High School that we have found that have worked for us to connect with this population of parents that we were not reaching out to before.

First of all, student recognition dinners. I'm not talking about the traditional team banquets or anything of that type. But, instead, finding small successes -- maybe it's just a student going from an F grade to the D; maybe it was a student that had fewer absences one month than the previous month; or maybe it is a student that did something kind for another individual in the building.

We've developed partnerships with restaurants in the community where these kids live and have the dinners there. And we've gotten sponsors for these dinners. And we've had tremendous response from parents coming to these informal sessions, and then it's been a chance to open those lines of communication and to facilitate further involvement of those parents in our school community.

A second example is connected with an outreach, community service outreach that our school does. And that's every year we work -- our human anatomy and physiology students work to increase the minority numbers on the national blood donor register -- I'm sorry, bone marrow register. There are not enough minorities represented as far as bone marrow donors. So they take that upon themselves to solicit more members.

They go to churches in communities where the congregation is predominantly minority -- and I go with the students to support them in their endeavor, but also to use that as an opportunity to dialogue with parents, with community members and, again, to facilitate those lines of communication. I'll also go and speak at Sunday school classes and meet with other local community groups.

A third program that has worked well for us is a presence in the community. And I've heard a number of people talk about community service. I think that is a very, very important aspect to incorporate into schools, because what happens is, community service is a two-way street. If we can demonstrate to the community what we are doing for them, they are more willing to come back and do for us. And it has been a win-win relationship within our communities.

And, finally, assets for youth. I know there is going to be a speaker later today in one of the panel sessions on developmental assets. We have incorporated those assets for youth that we can support within our school -- we have incorporated them into our school goals, into our school objectives and made that a part of our life at Palmer High School.

The results we've seen: decreased dropout rate, increased graduation rate, a significant decline in discipline referrals, test scores that are among the highest of any public or private school in southern Colorado, a waiting list now to come into our school almost doubling the enrollment from where it was seven years ago, and absolutely no discussion of wanting to close the school down again.

Together, we have made a difference at Palmer High School and I am convinced, together, we can make a difference as a nation.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think we've heard not only an overview of issues affecting young people, but some very positive, practical solutions that can be put to work in the lives of our young people through service and jobs and outreach and mentoring, through the parents and our families trying to be given more support to do what parents want to do -- and that is play a positive, productive role in their children's lives. The recommendations about what schools can do and community groups -- all of that together really adds up to a very positive agenda that gives each one of us something to not only think about, but actually to do.

I was struck as Mr. Engeln was making his remarks that at the very beginning our keynote speaker, Mr. Ben Casey, talked about how the Y was changing to adapt to the needs of families and young people today, providing shopping services and dry cleaning services as a way of getting the parents involved.

And I'm not at all convinced that children are any different today than they ever were, but I am absolutely convinced that our society and its institutions have changed. So I think rather than putting so much attention on trying to make our kids somehow adapt, we should be thinking of ways that our institutions can change to be more supportive of our kids and provide what our children have always needed and the kind of connectedness and support and love and discipline that every young person really wants and needs from us.

Many of the projects that the administration has tried to do over the last seven years come from research that has been done over the last 10 to 15 years. I remember being involved with the W.T. Grant Foundation some years ago, talking about what we needed to do to provide more school-to-work help and more support for teens in the work place, to make a better connection between education and work, and to provide service opportunities. We haven't done enough to implement all that we know needs to be done, but we certainly, I think now, are aware of what we should be doing.

I'm sorry that we're not going to have more time right now for discussion. But we have been running late and we need to be sure we go on to provide the opportunity in the breakout

sessions that all of you are looking forward to for more debates and dialogue and more suggestions.

We've already, I think, said goodbye to our friends who were participating via satellite. But now I want to offer you a chance to break for lunch. I hope that the conversation continues at the lunch tables. And please proceed through these doors to the State Dining Room for lunch. And thank you all so much for being part of this conference. (Applause.)

END 1:30 P.M. EDT