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DAILY POINTS OF LIGHT

The President recognizes a "Daily Point of Light" six days a week. Daily Points of Light are those who successfully address our most pressing social problems through direct and consequential acts of community service. Individuals, families, businesses, groups, and organizations of every conceivable type are taking successful action to combat drug abuse, illiteracy, inadequate education, environmental decay, homelessness, hunger, AIDS, and other critical ills.

By reclaiming a drug-plagued, crime-ridden neighborhood, tutoring those who are illiterate, mentoring a troubled young person, befriending a lonely senior citizen, providing housing for the homeless, or protecting our environment, Americans have enriched their communities and, in doing so, have brought meaning and fulfillment to their own lives.

Daily Points of Light recognition is intended not only to honor those who are making a difference in the lives of those in need, but more importantly to urge every individual, family, business, union, school, place of worship, club, group, and other institution in America to make serving others central to their life and work. As the President has said, "If you have a hammer, find a nail. If you know how to read, find someone who can't. If you're not in trouble, seek out someone who is..."

"The growth and magnification of Points of Light must now become an American mission... it is increasingly clear to more and more Americans that our greatest social problems — drugs, education reform, the environment, crime — will be solved only by the active engagement of tens of millions of individuals and millions of groups and institutions who have never been involved before in these problems and who will never be compensated one nickel for their work."

Points of Light demonstrate that problems in America can be solved. The President believes that every American wants to be a Point of Light to those in need, if only they are shown how they can make a difference. We therefore strongly encourage not only every newspaper, magazine, television and radio station, but also every other business, group, and other institution in America, to communicate in their own way the story of Daily Points of Light to the entire Nation.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

POINTS OF LIGHT

"From now on in America, any definition of a successful life must include serving others."

President George Bush
June 22, 1989

What is a "Point of Light"?

A "Point of Light" is an individual, business, union, school, place of worship, club, group or organization voluntarily taking direct and consequential action to solve drug abuse, illiteracy, inadequate education, homelessness, hunger, AIDS or other serious social problems in their own community.

Can every American be a "Point of Light"?

Every American, regardless of age, gender, race, economic circumstance, background or physical ability has a gift to give to someone else in need. In Polk, Nebraska, each third grade child in Ms. Dian Wurst's class is assigned a homebound senior citizen to telephone each day to offer words of comfort and cheer. In Houston, Texas, sexually abused teenagers like Shelley Spell counsel other young victims. In San Diego, California, Bob McElroy's partnership of concerned citizens, ranging from retired carpenters to college students, teach homeless people carpentry, budgeting, administration and other employment skills, pay them to work on construction projects and provide them with food, shelter and clothing free of charge until they earn enough money to become independent.

Why are people turning to Points of Light?

Points of Light are the only solution to our social problems. Effective government programs and a growing economy are essential to addressing social needs. However, news reports and polls today indicate almost universal disillusionment with the incapacity of government to solve social problems. And those Americans who believe that "a rising tide lifts all boats" are equally disillusioned by the fact that our nation's unparalleled recent prosperity has coexisted with widespread pockets of poverty and social disintegration. More and more people are forgetting Washington, their state capitols and city halls and forging their own solutions to social problems in their own backyards. The growth and magnification of these Points of Light must now become America's mission.

What core beliefs underlie the Points of Light movement?

- o Every social problem in America is being solved somewhere in the country by Points of Light.
- o Every American has an innate desire to be a Point of Light.
- o If every American were shown how to be of help to someone in need, every American would be drawn to serve as a Point of Light.

Are Points of Light a substitute for government?

The government has a critical role to play in addressing social problems. There is no substitute for effective government action. But without Points of Light, no social problem in America can be solved. Effective government programs can and do treat the drug-dependent, teach the illiterate, feed the hungry and house the homeless. But drug abuse, illiteracy, hunger, homelessness and other social problems are really symptoms of larger, more fundamental problems that programs cannot solve: the breakdown of the traditional family structure; the disintegration of communities; the loss of self-respect and, most importantly, hope. What the millions of Americans who live in darkness need most is not a program, but a web of family-like relationships that impart the values, habits, skills and self-confidence that result in the conviction that one's future is not limited by present circumstances.

Why are Americans responding to the Points of Light call?

- o Direct and consequential engagement in the lives of those in need brings the fulfillment and satisfaction that each of us seeks in life.
- o America's continued political, economic and military strength and global competitiveness demand that we successfully address our most serious social problems.
- o Americans recognize that they have a moral obligation to help those among us in need.

When will more people become Points of Light in their communities?

First, people must be assured that meaningful engagement in the lives of those in need is relatively easy and non-threatening. While some Americans have the courage to walk into a homeless shelter, soup kitchen or drug-plagued neighborhood on their own, most Americans will do so only if they can serve in groups or teams with others with whom they feel comfortable and compatible.

Accordingly, a principal aim of the Points of Light movement is to motivate Americans to serve with their family members, friends, co-workers, or fellow church or club members.

Second, people must be made aware of simple and appealing ideas for community service that they can implement in their own way.

Third, people must be convinced of their potential as leaders of community problem solving initiatives.

What is our strategy for making Points of Light a nationwide movement?

First, we must change attitudes about community service so that every individual, group and organization in America wants service to be central to their life and work.

Second, we must focus on what is working by identifying, enlarging and multiplying Points of Light across the country.

Third, we must discover, encourage and develop the countless number of people with untapped leadership potential within every organization and community.

Volume

Every business, union, school, place of worship, club, group and organization should develop community service projects in which every employee or member is urged to participate. Every individual in America should participate in some regular community service activity, either as an individual or through the workplace, the school, the place of worship or any one of the other groups and organizations of which he or she is a part.

Distinctive Competence

Every individual and institution should take stock of their particular gifts and talents and employ them in social problem solving. Individuals who have an interest in reading can spend time teaching those who are illiterate. Mothers can teach parenting skills to unwed pregnant teens. Law firms and doctors' offices can form mentoring relationships with young people, stimulating their interest in education and professional careers. Home builders can make low-cost housing available to the homeless. Restaurants and grocery stores can supply surplus food to the hungry each day.

Collaboration

Individuals and institutions working on their own can have an impact on social problems facing their community. But when individuals and institutions form partnerships with others,

especially those with whom they may never have worked together before, the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. This pooling and channeling of communities' collective capabilities is the only way to attack comprehensively the multiple problems of individuals in need. Accordingly, a special effort must be made to promote collaborative community problem solving among disparate groups.

Light from Light

Too many Americans believe that there is little or nothing they can do to make a difference. Yet millions of Americans of every age, gender, race, socioeconomic level, educational background and degree of physical ability are finding ways to address social problems in their communities. By identifying and spreading information about Points of Light to their peers in similar businesses, schools, unions, places of worship, groups, neighborhoods in other communities, we can show every American that there is a compelling role for all to play in solving society's most serious problems.

Leaders

In every community there are those of every age and background with untapped leadership potential. We must discover people with the courage and vision to craft solutions to the problems of their communities, recognize and recruit them to this cause, and conspicuously honor them for their work. These leaders are a community's "antibodies", its indigenous and potent natural defense against decay and destruction and its important source of renewal.

What is the Office of National Service?

To demonstrate the centrality of service to both his Presidency and the nation's future, President Bush became the first President to establish an office in the White House exclusively devoted to placing direct and consequential community service at the top of the national agenda. The Office performs the following functions:

- o Advises the President on community service policy and proposes ways for him to call the nation to service (Daily Point of Light recognition, Honorary Chairmanship of The Points of Light Foundation, recruitment of community service leaders, speeches, statements, meetings, visits);
- o Communicates the President's community service call to the nation (liaison to The Points of Light Foundation, periodic progress report mailings, briefings);

- o Proposes legislative initiatives to support community service (National and Community Service Act of 1990, tax policy, volunteer liability protection); and
- o Assists Cabinet departments and agencies in becoming model community service institutions.

What is The Points of Light Foundation?

The Points of Light Foundation is a private, non-profit, non-partisan corporation established in March, 1990. The role of the Foundation is to help to call the nation to engage in direct and consequential service focused on serious social problems and to translate this call into action through a variety of specific catalytic strategies and programs. Following a comprehensive planning process, the Foundation became operational in September, 1990. A list of the directors of the Foundation, of which the President serves as Honorary Chairman, is attached. For further information about the Foundation, please contact:

The Points of Light Foundation
 736 Jackson Place, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20503
 (202) 408-5162

How will Points of Light transform our future?

We envision a new America, one in which every business, union, school, place of worship, club, group and organization in every community is a Point of Light. It is a nation in which every American finds personal fulfillment through direct and consequential service to those in need.

We see an America where all people are aware of the benefit to themselves, their community and the nation of engagement in community service and act on this awareness. Leaders in organizations of every size and at every level of society make service a part of what they are and do. All people have ready access to service ideas that work and are stimulated to build on these ideas. Communities have the capacity to support the active engagement of all their citizens in effective service initiatives. And, both young and old lead the rest of the nation in a renewed and enduring commitment to service.

For further information, please write or call:

The Office of National Service
 (The White House Points of Light Office)
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500
 (202) 456-6266