

On this free path I trod  
 What am I from them?  
 For I saw only numbers  
 Not the faces of the dead  
 These people die for me  
 And what do I do for them?  
 I forget their faces and their stories  
 Because I see only numbers  
 I cannot look at the setting sun  
 The horrors are too much  
 For I know their faces are there  
 Never to be touched  
 I look upon this barren land  
 Full of blood and hate  
 I don't understand their pain  
 For I can see only numbers on this slate  
 My tears they fall on burning sands  
 As blood comes from their wounds  
 I still cannot understand  
 For I see only numbers  
 These numbers do not tell the story  
 Of these woman and these men  
 For the only thing I can see is these heart-  
 less numbers  
 That burn inside my head  
 All these people crying  
 For their wounded and their dead  
 I cannot feel them  
 All I have is these numbers in my head

—  
 "DEEP DOWN"

(By Alarie Chu)

3RD PLACE GRADES 7-9

Friend  
 Dear and old  
 Veteran  
 Part of World War 2  
 Fragile  
 But hard willed  
 Herman Czeck  
 Greatest man to live  
 You only see a pale-old soul  
 But deep down there are acts of greatness;  
 Kindness, sweetness  
 Deep down hides a boy of twenty  
 A young draftee to fight in the army;  
 Soldier, military  
 Deep down suffers a man who's seen death  
 The deaths from a world's disaster;  
 The Second World War  
 It's hard to imagine,  
 People being scared  
 Of such a harmless chum  
 Since my birth in 2001  
 There was an extra family member;  
 Dad, Uncle  
 A selfless giver  
 A man of joy and love;  
 Admirable, marvelous  
 A Christian companion  
 One loved by all;  
 A stupendous gift from God  
 It's hard to see,  
 The deep down truth  
 Of a life long lived  
 Just last month  
 A stroke came along  
 To the strongest man I know  
 Who still is recovering  
 It just goes to show  
 We live life one day at a time  
 Not knowing which one will be the last.

—  
 "BROTHER"

(By Joseph Gabel)

1ST PLACE GRADES 10-12

He is a wind rider gliding above the clouds  
 He is a predator dominating the sky  
 He is homeland security aloft  
 He is America's ever present air wall  
 He is an eagle with piercing gaze  
 He is a guardian for the defenseless  
 He is talons snatching our defenders from  
 danger  
 He is courage with wings  
 He is the American heart patrolling the  
 skies

He is my Brother

—  
 "MEMORIES OF THE HOME FRONT"

(By Sarah Borntrager)

2ND PLACE GRADES 10-12

As a child of a veteran,  
 My youth was different than most.  
 I remember when my father would leave.  
 My mother would hand out his shirts to us  
 children to sleep in.  
 At the age of six, I had seemingly come to  
 terms with the chance,  
 that one day my mother would hold a folded  
 flag instead of her husband.  
 I had asked my mother one day that,  
 "If daddy died, would we go and visit him at  
 the cemetery?"  
 My mother immediately tried to reassure me  
 that daddy was ok, to which I replied,  
 "I said IF."  
 I don't truly remember my father at home  
 all that well,  
 But I can remember what I did when my fa-  
 ther was gone.

Wake up,  
 Get dressed,  
 Good morning mommy,  
 Go to school,  
 Learn,  
 Go home,  
 Mommy, I'm home is daddy back?,  
 Eat supper,  
 Get daddy's shirt,  
 Pray for daddy to come home safe,  
 And sleep.  
 My father was never truly in danger,  
 He was just a loadmaster.  
 I never understood that,  
 so the joy of seeing him was not just that.  
 It was the joy of hugging a father,  
 not a flag.  
 But now I understand.  
 My father served in the US Air Force for 24  
 years,  
 As a weapons loader and then as a  
 C-130 Hercules loadmaster.  
 And I couldn't be any more proud of him.  
 I love my veteran,  
 I love my dad.

—  
 "LIFE SAVERS"

(By Taylor Van de Streek)

3RD PLACE GRADES 10-12

You see them on the street,  
 You see them in your school,  
 You see them at home.  
 They're the ones who take the risk for free-  
 dom.  
 They come home in hopes  
 That life will be the same.  
 But nothing can stop the memories  
 Of all the destruction they've seen.  
 I pray for all of them  
 When I can,  
 So they return safe and in peace  
 To sleep calm in their beds.  
 They could be a Physics Teacher,  
 A Family Friend,  
 A Father or Mother,  
 Or maybe even the man begging on the  
 street.  
 They are our Veterans,  
 We have many in our lives.  
 So the next time you see one  
 Thank them; they might have saved your  
 life.●

#### CERRO GORDO COUNTY, IOWA

● Mr. HARKIN, Madam President, the strength of my State of Iowa lies in its vibrant local communities, where citizens come together to foster economic development, make smart investments

to expand opportunity, and take the initiative to improve the health and well-being of residents. Over the decades, I have witnessed the growth and revitalization of so many communities across my State, and it has been deeply gratifying to see how my work in Congress has supported these local efforts.

I have always believed in accountability for public officials, and this, my final year in the Senate, is an appropriate time to give an accounting of my work across four decades representing Iowa in Congress. I take pride in accomplishments that have been national in scope—for instance, passing the Americans with Disabilities Act and spearheading successful farm bills. But I take a very special pride in projects that have made a big difference in local communities across my State.

Today, I would like to give an accounting of my work with leaders and residents of Cerro Gordo County to build a legacy of a stronger local economy, better schools and educational opportunities, and a healthier, safer community.

Between 2001 and 2013, the creative leadership in your community has worked with me to secure funding in Cerro Gordo County worth over \$13 million and successfully acquired financial assistance from programs I have fought hard to support, which have provided more than \$182 million to the local economy.

Of course, one of my favorite memories of working together is working to help Northern Iowa Community College obtain over \$2 million in Federal funds to support their programs, helping the city to improve the drinking water supply, and working to improve area lakes and waterways.

Among the highlights: investing in Iowa's economic development through targeted community projects: In northern Iowa, we have worked together to grow the economy by making targeted investments in important economic development projects including improved roads and bridges, modernized sewer and water systems, and better housing options for residents of Cerro Gordo County. In many cases, I have secured Federal funding that has leveraged local investments and served as a catalyst for a whole ripple effect of positive, creative changes. For example, working with mayors, city council members, and local economic development officials in Cerro Gordo County, I have fought for more than \$8.4 million for water treatment facilities which have allowed major food processing entities to operate in the region, knowing that the water they need to use is clean and healthy, helping to create jobs and expand economic opportunities. I have also secured over \$310,000 to clean up area lakes and waterways, over \$393,000 to rehabilitate the City National Bank Building, and over \$444,000 for repairs to the Delaware Street bridge.

Main Street Iowa: One of the greatest challenges we face—in Iowa and all

across America—is preserving the character and vitality of our small towns and rural communities. This isn't just about economics. It is also about maintaining our identity as Iowans. Main Street Iowa helps preserve Iowa's heart and soul by providing funds to revitalize downtown business districts. This program has allowed towns such as Mason City to use that money to leverage other investments to jumpstart change and renewal. I am so pleased that Cerro Gordo County has earned \$150,000 through this program. These grants build much more than buildings. They build up the spirit and morale of people in our small towns and local communities.

**School grants:** Every child in Iowa deserves to be educated in a classroom that is safe, accessible, and modern. That is why, for the past decade and a half, I have secured funding for the innovative Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program—better known among educators in Iowa as Harkin grants for public schools construction and renovation. Across 15 years, Harkin grants worth more than \$132 million have helped school districts to fund a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools. In many cases, these Federal dollars have served as the needed incentive to leverage local public and private dollars, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect within a school district. Over the years, Cerro Gordo County has received \$2.2 million in Harkin grants.

**Disaster mitigation and prevention:** In 1993, when historic floods ripped through Iowa, it became clear to me that the national emergency-response infrastructure was woefully inadequate to meet the needs of Iowans in flood-ravaged communities. I went to work dramatically expanding the Federal Emergency Management Agency's hazard mitigation program, which helps communities reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters and enables mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery period. Disaster relief means more than helping people and businesses get back on their feet after a disaster, it means doing our best to prevent the same predictable flood or other catastrophe from recurring in the future. The hazard mitigation program that I helped create in 1993 provided critical support to Iowa communities impacted by the devastating floods of 2008. Cerro Gordo County has received over \$9 million to remediate and prevent widespread destruction from natural disasters.

**Agricultural and rural development:** Because I grew up in a small town in rural Iowa, I have always been a loyal friend and fierce advocate for family farmers and rural communities. I have been a member of the House or Senate Agriculture Committee for 40 years—including more than 10 years as chairman of the Senate Agriculture Com-

mittee. Across the decades, I have championed farm policies for Iowans that include effective farm income protection and commodity programs; strong, progressive conservation assistance for agricultural producers; renewable energy opportunities; and robust economic development in our rural communities. Since 1991, through various programs authorized through the farm bill, Cerro Gordo County has received more than \$8.4 million from a variety of farm bill programs.

**Keeping Iowa communities safe:** I also firmly believe that our first responders need to be appropriately trained and equipped, able to respond to both local emergencies and to statewide challenges such as, for instance, the methamphetamine epidemic. Since 2001, Cerro Gordo County's fire departments have received over \$1.19 million for firefighter safety and operations equipment and more than \$879,000 in Byrne Justice Assistance Grants.

**Wellness and health care:** Improving the health and wellness of all Americans has been something I have been passionate about for decades. That is why I fought to dramatically increase funding for disease prevention, innovative medical research, and a whole range of initiatives to improve the health of individuals and families not only at the doctor's office but also in our communities, schools, and workplaces. I am so proud that Americans have better access to clinical preventive services, nutritious food, smoke-free environments, safe places to engage in physical activity, and information to make healthy decisions for themselves and their families. These efforts not only save lives, they will also save money for generations to come thanks to the prevention of costly chronic diseases, which account for a whopping 75 percent of annual health care costs. I am pleased that Cerro Gordo County has recognized this important issue by securing more than \$460,000 for community wellness activities.

This is at least a partial accounting of my work on behalf of Iowa, and specifically Cerro Gordo County, during my time in Congress. In every case, this work has been about partnerships, cooperation, and empowering folks at the State and local level, including in Cerro Gordo County, to fulfill their own dreams and initiatives. And, of course, this work is never complete. Even after I retire from the Senate, I have no intention of retiring from the fight for a better, fairer, richer Iowa. I will always be profoundly grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of Iowa as their Senator. ●

#### MUSCATINE COUNTY, IOWA

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initiative to improve the health and well-being of residents. Over the decades, I have witnessed the growth and revitalization of so many communities across my State, and it has been deeply gratifying to see how my work in Congress has supported these local efforts.

I have always believed in accountability for public officials, and this, my final year in the Senate, is an appropriate time to give an accounting of my work across four decades representing Iowa in Congress. I take pride in accomplishments that have been national in scope for instance, passing the Americans with Disabilities Act and spearheading successful farm bills. But I take a very special pride in projects that have made a big difference in local communities across my State.

Today, I would like to give an accounting of my work with leaders and residents of Muscatine County to build a legacy of a stronger local economy, better schools and educational opportunities, and a healthier, safer community.

Between 2001 and 2013, the creative leadership in your community has worked with me to secure funding in Muscatine County worth over \$4.8 million and successfully acquire financial assistance from programs I have fought hard to support, which have provided more than \$10.2 million to the local economy.

Of course, one of my favorite memories of working together is the community's success in obtaining over \$2.5 million for airport improvements since 2001. As a strong supporter of small community airports, I have long fought for funding from programs that support service to small communities and infrastructure support to keep these airports modern.

Among the highlights:

Investing in Iowa's economic development through targeted community projects: In Southeast Iowa, we have worked together to grow the economy by making targeted investments in important economic development projects, including improved roads and bridges, modernized sewer and water systems, and better housing options for residents of Muscatine County. In many cases, I have secured Federal funding that has leveraged local investments and served as a catalyst for a whole ripple effect of positive, creative changes. For example, working with mayors, city council members, and local economic development officials in Muscatine County, I have fought for \$450,000 to improve the water system as well as more than \$894,000 in funds for flood control, helping to create jobs and expand economic opportunities.

**School grants:** Every child in Iowa deserves to be educated in a classroom that is safe, accessible, and modern. That is why for the past decade and a half I have secured funding for the innovative Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program—better known among educators in Iowa as